

*Just Around the
Corner to the*

**LIGHT
OF DAY**

"LIGHT OF DAY"

JUST AROUND THE CORNER TO
THE LIGHT OF DAY

(aka "Born In The U.S.A.")

by

Paul Schrader

November 20, 1985

"Here's to ya, Cleveland, home of
the music the Midwest needs!"

--Kid Leo, disc jockey,
WMMS-FM

CREDITS

1 INT. CAR NIGHT

Joe Rasnick, Patti Rasnick and Bu Montgomery sit in front of a 1975 Nova. Child seat in back.

Their car is parked on a deserted residential street in Cleveland Heights, a middle class neighborhood. The summer night echoes with cicada wings, Midwest white noise. A dog barks from a nearby street.

JOE RASNICK, 22, at the wheel, wears a faded "Barbusters" T-shirt, single silver earring. He writes lyrics, plays backup guitar/keyboards. An easy-going manner.

PATTI RASNICK, 25, Joe's sister, sits in the middle. She wears an old motorcycle jacket over a white "Bundeswehr" tank top. Lead guitar and vocals. The jacket's hardly necessary; in fact, she's sweating. Patti's mood is edgy, tense, as if uncomfortable in her own skin.

BU MONTGOMERY, 34, sitting shotgun, wears a plaid shirt and Cleveland Browns cap. Plays bass guitar. He's sided part-time, full-time, anytime for a dozen local bands. His offbeat humor sees him through good times and bad.

They watch as a THIRTIESH COUPLE, dressed to go out, argue on their front porch down the block:

JOE

They were supposed to be out.

PATTI

Her office social. They're a half hour late.

JOE

So?

PATTI

So? So they're having a fight.

JOE

So? Why can't they fight in the car like everybody else? That's what cars are for.

BU

This is really dumb.

CONTINUED

1 CONT'D.

PATTI

I never knew you had a problem with dumb.

BU

That's normal dumb. This is really dumb.

JOE

It'll take five minutes. The cellar door is always open. Pick up the tools. Patti's arranged to swap them for the Peavey 16-track.

BU

Do it alone.

JOE

Somebody has to stand watch.

BU

(to Joe)

You. "Honk twice." Why am I here?

PATTI

You said you wanted to come.

BU

I thought you were goin' for burgers or something. Not rip off a house.

The Thirties Couple raise their voices after a respite.
Bu groans:

BU

There they go again. I love ya, Patti, but I'm gone. Tomorrow. Gotta put in some time at home anyway.

JOE

How...?

BU

I'll hitch. Cover the dome light.

Patti cups the dome light as Bu slips out. He's soon out of sight. Pause.

JOE

He's got a point.

CONTINUED

1 CONT'D.

PATTI

This was your idea too.

JOE

Can't I change my mind?

PATTI

I don't know how you decide anything. "Man Freaks Out During Pepsi Challenge, Injures Two."

JOE

It was a good idea before, now I got a better one.

PATTI

We gotta get outta here.

JOE

I know.

PATTI

Outta this town. Outta Cleveland. That's why we need a better sound. You've been talking about this Kelsey for weeks.

JOE

(acquiesces)

Okay.

PATTI

Okay.

The house goes dark. The Thirties Couple close the front door, walk down the steps.

JOE

There they go.

The Couple abruptly resume their argument. The woman turns, stalks inside; her husband follows. A house light goes on.

PATTI

Damn.

JOE

(a beat)

Sis, I'm splitting.

PATTI

Wait.

CONTINUED

1 CONT'D.

JOE

They're inside. They're not leaving. Are you coming?

PATTI

Wait a little longer.

JOE

I'm splitting.
(hits horn twice)

PATTI

Very funny.

JOE

See you later.

Joe exits. His footsteps echo down the blacktop. Patti keeps her eyes on the house. She knows that tool theft is out of the question, but doesn't budge. It's a point of honor.

PATTI

(to herself)
We gotta get outta here.

END CREDITS

CUT TO:

2 CLEVELAND MONTAGE

Steady drum beats pound as the credits fade. Patti's voice attacks the opening lines of the title song, a working class anthem. Three guitars join in.

Early morning: we glide across the steel grey expanse of Lake Erie, across the harbor, across the Cleveland Flats--an awesome stretch of heavy industry along the Cuyahoga River.

Five miles of factories and foundries, smokestacks and tank farms. Beneath us the black engines of industry exhale white streams of smoke into the fluorescent sky.

1955, CLEVELAND, whore of Detroit, supplier of rubber and steel, tinted glass windows and chrome ashtrays.

1965, CLEVELAND, eager whore, polluting her rivers and lakes, fouling her skies with greed.

1975, CLEVELAND, abandoned whore, destitute, having sold her birthright for broken promises.

CONTINUED

2

CONT'D.

1985, CLEVELAND, repentant whore, rebuilding, reclaiming her pride.

The Barbusters are revealed in their daytime roles:

--Joe and Bu work at Midwest Rubber Reclaiming.

--Patti and her son BENJI, 4, return cans and bottles at the Pick-n-Save.

--GENE BODINE, 20, roadie and sound engineer, works the cash register at a card and novelty store in Randall Park Mall. Gene, a blond hunk in cut-offs, wears his Barbusters T-shirt. His right arm's in a wrist cast.

--BILLY TETTORE, 18, drums, carves a swastika on his desktop. His classmates are fellow remedial types. Feather earring. Good looking in a superficial fashion and knows it.

A buzzer sounds. Gene checks his watch. Patti straps Benji in the child seat. Joe and Bu shut their lockers. Billy hits the sidewalk.

CUT TO:

3

EXT.

EUCLID TAVERN

AFTERNOON

On Euclid Ave., downtown side of Cleveland Heights--an area already "marginal."

CUT TO:

4

INT.

EUCLID TAVERN

AFTERNOON

The Barbusters are rehearsing. Patti, in white T-shirt and jeans, sings the last lines as Joe and Bu disconnect their guitars. Patti arcs her back into the mike, hits the last syllable. She loves to sing.

The Euclid is a bar, not a club. People don't come here to hear rock and roll, they come here to hear rock and roll while they drink.

Across the room, a couple of unemployed youngbloods sit at the bar. A group of factory workers, fresh from their shift, enter laughing as they call to OOGIE, 39, the bartender.

Joe and Bu pack their guitars. Patti sings to Billy's lone accompaniment. A charred guitar hangs above the makeshift stage. Two girls shoot pool.

CONTINUED

4

CONT'D.

PATTI
(looks around)
Hey, what's wrong?

BILLY
I'm here.

BU
Promised I'd meet Cindy at the
mall. I'm late already. Can you
read my lips?
(blows him a kiss)

BILLY
That's what I love about rock 'n
roll--committment.

BU
Go home and play in front of
the mirror.

One of the youngbloods drops a quarter into the jukebox,
plays Motley Crue. Patti turns to Bu--he's already rehearsed
past his deadline.

PATTI
Sorry. Thanks, Bu.

BU
You weren't bad yourself.

PATTI
How about you, Joe?

JOE
(closes guitar case)
Tomorrow.

Patti calls to the bartender:

PATTI
Oog? Who you got coming in
tonight?

OOGIE
Yogurt Moon.

PATTI
Yogurt Moon?

OOGIE
They used to be the Clones.

CONTINUED

4

CONT'D.

GENE

From Shaker Heights. Daddy bought
'em uniforms so they went psychedelic.

JOE

I know them. They worked for free
at Cheers.

BU

Fuck. No wonder we could only get
a hundred.

JOE

And we pitched a bitch there.

BU

We're paid up front this weekend?
Visa won't let me slide anymore.

PATTI

Damn straight, Oog?
(Oogie laughs)
'Cause we know the magic words:

ALL TOGETHER

"Rock and Roll!"
(they cheer)
"Party!"
(cheer again)
"Cleveland!"

They all laugh.

PATTI

Never fails.

CUT TO

5

INT.

JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE NIGHT

Joe sits on the couch, watching MTV, reading Penthouse.
Benji bangs on a plastic toy guitar.

The living room is decorated undergraduate chic: footlocker
coffee table, frayed sofa, ULC-15 poster and a Barbuster
flyer on the otherwise bare wall. Joe turns to Benji:

JOE

Be careful. Bongo-boy. You'll
break it.

Patti enters from the kitchen, wipes her hands on her
jeans. She caresses Benji's head.

CONTINUED

5 CONT'D.

PATTI
Is this the Tears for Fears
video?

JOE
(glancing up)
Looks like it.

PATTI
What happened? Bored with
"Love Connection"?

MTV video jock Mark Goodman comes on:

PATTI
Ugh. When they gonna get
rid of him?
(notices Penthouse)
You agreed not to read that
around Benji.

JOE
What?

PATTI
(sings)
P-E-N-T-H-O--

JOE
I'm not looking at the pictures.
Honest.

PATTI
It makes an impression anyway.

Joe tucks the mag under a cushion. Benji smacks a chord.
imitates:

BENJI
"P-E-N--"

JOE
Cut that out.

Benji, more defiant than hurt, throws his toy guitar to the
floor. Patti reassures him as she returns the guitar.

CONTINUED

5 CONT'D.

JOE
Don't pick on me, Patti. I got anxiety. I don't know if I can relate to 14 year-olds anymore.

PATTI
You can relate to them, they just can't relate to you.

JOE
Sweet.

Patti picks up Benji, signals Joe with her eyes. He turns off the television.

JOE
Benji, the TV's off. You know what that means, don't you?
(a beat)
It means it's bedtime.
(Benji protests)
Don't give your mother a hard time. I know for a fact that she has something special to read to you. And if you're good, she may even sing something.

Patti turns to take Benji upstairs.

PATTI
Let's go, little man..
(to Joe)
You going out?

JOE
You kidding? I barely dragged my ass through today. I'm shitfaced tired.

PATTI
I may.

JOE
We gotta get a present for mother's birthday. Any suggestions?

Patti shoots him a cold stare.

JOE
Okay, okay, sorry I mentioned it.

Patti heads upstairs, says to Benji:

PATTI
Blow a kiss to Uncle Joe.

5 CONT'D.

Benji does; Joe reciprocates with a smile. Patti and Benji disappear upstairs. Joe fishes Penthouse out of the sofa.

CUT TO:

6 INT. UPSTAIRS NIGHT

Later that night. Joe tiptoes to Benji's room in his underwear.

Joe sticks his head in Benji's room. Benji rolls about, snuggles up to his stuffed animals. Joe watches silently, then closes the door.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. THE RASCAL HOUSE NIGHT

A video arcade on Coventry. Local teenagers hang out around parked motorcycles. Video noises echo from inside.

CUT TO:

8 INT. THE RASCAL HOUSE NIGHT

A wall of synthetic sound: all video pings, pongs and buzzes. Not even the heavy metal muzak can compete.

Schoolkids squeeze between rows of flashing video games. The air hangs thick with teen sex; even the names of the machines reflect this: "Scorcher," "Gorgar," "Vulgus."

Patti, in her leather jacket, sits alone at an "Infraspace" machine. Quarters are stacked on the control panel. Her face is blank as she manipulates the buttons and joystick. She's in the zero zone.

CUT TO:

9 MONTAGE: "CLEVELAND ROCKS!"

6:00 a.m. Cobalt light spreads across the Cuyahoga Valley. Joe pulls in front of a brick apartment house in the Coventry district. A black Kawasaki in front. Bu, lunch bucket in hand, walks to the Chevy.

--Joe and Bu punch in at Midwest Rubber. There's no music, only the conversational drone of shuffling sleepy men. A hand-lettered sign reads: "Performance Is A Reflection Of Attitude."

CONTINUED

9

CONT'D.

--Joe takes his place at the retread sorting line. He pulls a pair of headphones from his pocket, puts them on. Bam! The factory noises are 100% replaced by the aggressive chant of Ian Hunter's 1978 rock anthem, "Cleveland Rocks!"

--Gene opens his lunch bag in the stock room of the card store. Inside, two yuppie wives discuss scented candles. Gene unwraps a sandwich as he punches the boom box beside him: "CLEVELAND ROCKS!"

--Billy, in Health and Safety class, listens to a lecture on "sexual responsibility." He slips his transistor earplug into his ear as the teacher writes on the board. He watches, smiling: "CLEVELAND ROCKS! CLEVELAND ROCKS!"

CUT TO:

10

EXT.

JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE DAY

A white tract house in Cleveland Heights. Joe's Chevy stands in the drive. A bent basketball hoop is mounted on the garage; the garage door is open.

CUT TO:

11

EXT.

BACKYARD

DAY

Saturday afternoon. The Barbusters gather at Patti and Joe's for weekly equipment repair.

Gene, Billy and Bu sit on the back lawn uncoiling and rewinding the "snake"--cable. Benji, wearing an "It's OK. I'm with the Band" T-shirt, watches. A Cocker Spaniel drifts in and out, oblivious to Benji's attention.

Next door, neighborhood kids play on swings.

CUT TO:

12

INT.

GARAGE

DAY

Joe and Patti labor over stacks of equipment: four Marshall speakers, a BGW 750 power amp, a Crown 150. The garage serves as a workshop/storeroom for the band: used and defunct equipment fills the room. A bag of rusting golf clubs rests atop broken toys and appliances.

Patti holds a light as Joe solders a crossover connection on the amp rack.

CONTINUED

12 CONT'D.

JOE

...just go down to Randall Park Mall, I said. Look at all the people, all dressed in different clothes, all thinking different things--yet all trying to be happy. Just think about it. All over the world, billions of people, every one of them trying to be happy. And she said, "Wow, I didn't know rock and roll players were so deep."

PATTI

(laughs)

This is Sue Pisarcik's friend?
What is she, 16?

JOE

She's older than that. She's 17.

PATTI

Sue's 17. This girl's a year younger.

JOE

Don't look it. Have you seen this girl? So beautiful...

PATTI

...so dumb.

JOE

...bright like a nightlight...

PATTI

...no cheek bones. In ten years:
Edsel-face.

JOE

(working)

I swear God must be perverse. He just sits around dreaming up these beautiful women, sends them down here to make us feel like shit, then gives 'em zip for brains so they run off with the first dealer they meet. It's the angels. They drive Him buggy.

PATTI

She'll break your heart.

CONTINUED

12 CONT'D.

JOE
(clutches chest)
Please.

PATTI
Get Sue to set you up.

JOE
You kidding? You born yesterday?

PATTI
(catty)
Yeah. "Patti: Day 2."

JOE
I'm serious. She hates me.

PATTI
(extends hand)
I'm Patti:

JOE
(shakes)
Hi.

PATTI
I'll set you up. I know her
sister. Besides, she doesn't
hate you. Nobody hates you.

A soddered connection breaks.

JOE
Damn.

PATTI
If we had the Kelsey, we wouldn't
need this.

JOE
(dismissive)
Non-subject.
(gestures)
Hold this.

PATTI
What's with the Jack Webb?
You've done your share of
"creative appropriation."

JOE
It's just you gotta be more careful.
At first it's fun, then each time it's
something more...

CONTINUED

12 CONT'D.

PATTI

Do I have to hear this? What's next?
The part about little brother's paycheck
and how you support the band?

JOE

I thought we were talking about
Sue Pisarcik's friend?

PATTI

Twelve track music, one-track mind.

Joe looks up, relieved to see someone coming:

JOE

Here comes Cindy.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. BACKYARD DAY

CINDY MONTGOMERY, 28, Bu's wife, wearing her nurse's uniform,
enters carrying a large bag of Kentucky Fried Chicken. She
waves to Patti and Joe!

Bu stands, gives her a big hug.

BU

Grub's up!

Benji scrambles in his tiny sneakers, calling:

BENJI

Mom! Uncle Joe!

Cindy caresses Benji as Patti and Joe emerge from the garage.
Benji goes to his mother's side.

They sit on the lawn; Cindy and Bu distribute chicken parts.

BILLY

Beer?

JOE

In the fridge.

BILLY

(jumps up)

I'll get it. Generic?

PATTI

(nods)

My money, my brand. You only
go 'round once.

CONTINUED

13

CONT'D.

Billy jogs inside as Gene wraps his torn tennis shoe in duct tape.

GENE

Speaking of which, what'd we settle for tonight?

PATTI

\$125 against 100% of the door.

GENE

In other words, \$125?

PATTI

Plus free drinks and red hots.

BU

Oh, yeah, it's gonna be a hot time in Bum Fuck, Egypt.

The Spaniel tries to slurp mashed potatoes from Benji's styrofoam cup. Patti sends the mutt running with a slap.

JOE

Watch your food.

PATTI

(to Cindy)

You gonna babysit here tonight or your place?

CINDY

Here's easier.

BU

That way at least one of you has to come home when I do.

JOE

I noticed that. Can we help if it takes so long to wind down?

CINDY

Bu used to say that...

BU

(overlapping)

...I still do...

CINDY

...till I got my own wind down...

CONTINUED

13 CONT'D.

JOE
 Don't get X-rated on me, Cindy...
 (calls)
 Billy, where's that beer? This
 ain't Michael Jackoff out here!

CUT TO:

14 INT. JOE AND PATTI'S KITCHEN DAY

Billy dials the wall phone beside the refrigerator as he tucks a six-pack under his arm.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. BACKYARD DAY

PATTI
 How can you wind down?

BU
 How do you spell that?

JOE
 M-i-c--what's he doing in there?
 (calls)
 Billy!

GENE
 He's calling "Dial-a-Metal-Riff."

BU
 Twenty-four hours a day.

JOE
 (yells)
 That's a toll call!

CUT TO:

16 INT. KITCHEN DAY

Billy listens as the phone connects: a short buzz and beep, followed by a blast of Judas Priest.

Billy beats imaginary drums to the guitar riff. Smiles.

CUT TO:

17

INT.

EUCLID TAVERN

NIGHT

Saturday night at the Euclid. Last night to party, last night to score--most of the guys here will stay until 2:30 trying. But, at the moment, getting drunk is the first priority.

They say disco never caught on in Cleveland because nobody ever cared about clothes. That's certainly true about tonight's crowd: wall to wall jeans, T-shirts and logo jackets.

On the dance floor (really just another part of the bar) two matched girls skank to prerecorded music. Sample conversation as a girl tries to get her boyfriend to dance. GIRL: "Com'on, let's dance." BOYFRIEND: "Fuck that. Only black people dance." GIRL: "Oh, yeah? And what do white people do? Get drunk and fall off their chairs?" BOYFRIEND: "Yeah, that's right."

On stage, Joe, Bu and Billy tune their instruments and kill time. Joe anxiously looks around for Patti. The "stage" is a six-inch platform covered by orange shag.

Gene adjusts the mixing board atop a pinball machine--the only available space. He walks back and forth, balancing volume levels.

Oogie, doubling as a bouncer, escorts an angry drunk to the door: "Anybody who can't think rational don't belong here and if you can't understand that you don't either."

A "Barbusters" chant goes up, then fades away. Joe and Billy look at each other helplessly.

BILLY

Where is she?

CUT TO

18

EXT.

RESIDENTIAL STREET

NIGHT

The Chevy Nova is parked in the same space, the same block as in the opening sequence.

Patti, alone in the front seat, watches as the Thirties Couple exit the house down the block, get into their car and drive away. She wears a Barbusters T-shirt and motorcycle jacket.

CUT TO

19

INT.

EUCLID TAVERN

NIGHT

The crowd is restless. Bu flirts with matching coeds. Oogie looks at Joe, who walks over to Bu:

CONTINUED

19 CONT'D.

JOE
What'll we do, Bu?

BU
We start playing, that's what.

JOE
She should be here by now.

BU
You sing.

JOE
No way. I can't sing. I
write.

BU
Start learnin'. Just hit the
wa-wa when your voice cracks--like
all the biggies do.

JOE
Okay, then you sing.

BU
(backs off)
Alright, so let's do an instrumental.
"Night of the Werewolf"

JOE
(broad smile)
Great.

Bu picks up his guitar. Joe gives the front two girls a
wink as the band kicks into Lee Kristofferson's 1959
instrumental--a guitar show-turn, full of cascading riffs

The crowd sends up a cheer and starts to dance. The sweaty
pack undulates--a single organism.

Midway through the instrumental, Joe spots Patti squeezing
inside. She elbows her way through the friendly crowd, many
of whom recognize her.

Joe stops playing mid-riff. Freezes. Bu and Billy stop,
turn to each other. The dancers grow silent, still, curious.

Joe points to Patti and calls:

CONTINUED

19

CONT'D.

JOE

"You got the look I want
to know better."

Patti stops in her tracks, throws her hands on her hips, stares at Joe. She waits for the crowd to clear a circle. Then yells back at Joe:

PATTI

"You got the look that's all
together."

Patti struts onstage to cheers and whistles. She and Joe lean into the mike:

PATTI AND JOE

"You got the Jordache look."

Patti and Joe spin their butts toward the crowd, bump buns, hug shoulders. Gene hands Patti her guitar; she grabs the mike:

PATTI

Alright, Cleveland!

Cheers. Patti is totally alive. She knows how to handle the crowd; the crowd loves it.

PATTI

Anybody here want to party?

(more cheers)

Anybody here want to rock and roll?

(pandemonium)

Then clap if you already ain't got it!

The crowd screams as the Barbusters punch into their opening number.

Joe stands slightly behind Patti; she hugs the mike. She slips something half-way out of her back pocket for him to see: a chrome tool box wrench.

CUT TO:

20

EXT.

PARENTS' HOUSE

DAY

Joe's blue Chevy pulls into the drive of a modest house in Lakewood, a well-kept middle-class community in West Cleveland. Each house is a success story; each represents the ability of a blue collar worker to earn his plot in the land of promise.

CONTINUED

20 CONT'D.

Joe, Patti and Bongo-boy walk to the house. Joe, carrying a present, is dressed in jeans and a sportcoat. Benji sports an Oshkosh outfit, Patti her motorcycle jacket.

CUT TO:

21 INT. PARENTS' LIVING ROOM DAY

The Rasnicks sit in the living room. JOAN RASNICK, 50, Patti and Joe's mother, brings in a tray of ubiquitous Protestant coffee. BENJAMIN RASNICK, 50-plus, their father, waits in a Queen Ann chair. Patti, Joe and Benji sit in pre-determined spots on a sofa alongside the Magnavox.

Joan distributes the coffee. She is ebullient and easy-going--an archetypal mother. But, beneath her facade, a clockwork mind.

Benjamin, her husband, says nothing, shows nothing. He's removed himself from the fray of family politics. He's quite content to be the titular head of the Rasnick household.

Joe spoons the sugar as Patti mixes milk in Benji's coffee.

MOTHER

How were the roads?

Patti, puzzled, looks at the clear summer weather.

PATTI

Terrible. Downpour. Hail as big as a baby's fist. Euclid Ave. was under a foot of water.

Joan glares at Patti; the tension's palpable. Mother and daughter regard each other with suspicion, opponents in an unarticulated battle. Joe breaks the tension:

JOE

It was fine, Mom. No problems.

Joe looks to his father. Ben Sr. motions Benji over; his grandson joins him. This man needs a hug.

MOTHER

Sometimes it can happen. Some real bad rainstorms this time last year.

JOE

It was clear. We took the shoreway.

Father and Benji play "hand-slap."

CONTINUED

21 CONT'D.

MOTHER

Last time everyone was here it
was raining.

PATTI

How are you, Dad?

FATHER

Can't complain.

A subtext of feeling between Patti and her father: feelings
never spoken, never to be spoken.

MOTHER

You know how I love you children.
It's so rare to have everybody in the
house at the same time--even though
we live so close. I thought last
year at Christmas...

Joe nods, sips his coffee.. In moments like these, he can't
tell if his mother's dotty or simply inane.

JOE

(interrupts)

We were working.

MOTHER

I don't understand why anyone would
want to work on Christmas. It's such
a treat to have everyone together.
Your father and I really appreciate
it. We really miss seeing you.

Religious periodicals lay neatly across the coffee table.
Joe pages through one.

JOE

Maybe this year.

MOTHER

You don't know how happy it makes
us to be all together.

Patti turns to Joe, whispers:

PATTI

She says that one more time and
I'm gonna dance to it.

Patti stands, stares point-blank at an Ohio relief map.

CONTINUED

21 CONT'D.

JOE

Benji and I come over every other week or so--or try to.

(to Benji)

Bongo-boy, let's see what's in Gram's toy box.

MOTHER

Yes, but it's so nice having everyone here.

Patti turns to Joe. An awkward pause--then Patti, as promised, starts to dance--bop, bop shoo-bop. Then verbalizes, "Bop, bop, shoo-bop." Joe turns from her, supressing a grin:

JOE

Yes it is.

CUT TO:

22

INT.

DINING ROOM

DAY

They sit around the remains of a birthday cake. Joe holds Benji on his lap. Joan Rasnick's unwrapped presents (a housecoat and paperback) rest on the buffet. Sixties religious bric-a-brac clutter the room: laminated plaques, calenders and slogan stickers. Sentiment, not style, is important here.

Laughing, they interrupt Mother mid-anecdote. She's a natural storyteller: just enough truth, just enough exaggeration. The punch line's irrelevant.

MOTHER

...it's true, honest. Dogs can tell if a person's lying. I mean its master, of course. Not just anybody. You couldn't just take a dog up to anybody and see if they were lying. It's got something to do with the sound of the voice.

A comic pause for disbelief.

JOE

(teasing)

Did somebody tell you this at the beauty parlor?

MOTHER

No.

CONTINUED

JOE
Merv Griffin?

Even Patti joins the playful banter:

PATTI
700 Club?

MOTHER
No, I read it.

JOE
Star?

PATTI
Donahue. It was Donahue. I know.
I saw it myself. With the sound off.
A woman with a Pekingnese.

JOE
(to Patti)
Donahue?

Benji clangs his spoon against his plate.

MOTHER
Maybe it was Donahue..

They laugh again. Benji struggles to get off Joe's lap.
Patti starts to rise. Mother stops her with a look.

MOTHER
Patti. We forgot to say Grace.

Patti slips back into her seat. The others lower their heads.
Joe folds Benji's hands. Father looks from Mother to Patti.
He knows what's coming.

MOTHER
Our Father who art in Heaven, we
thank Thee for bringing us together
safely. We thank Thee for watching
over our house...

Patti and Joe exchange glances. She tenses.

MOTHER
We ask Thee to watch over Patti, Joe
and little Benjamin. Grant them
health. Help them through their trials
and tribulations. We in particular ask
Thy help for Patti. We ask Thee to show
her a special measure of Grace...

CONTINUED

22 CONT'D.

Patti is about to explode. Joe tries to calm her, mouths the words, "Take it easy. Cool it."

MOTHER

Help her understand. Guide her ways.
Forgive the sins of her youth, the mistakes...

That does it. Patti slams her knife down, stands: bolts out of the room. Joe and Benji watch. Father glances up, winces: lowers his head.

MOTHER

We know Thou art all-forgiving...

Joe releases Benji, follows Patti.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. PARENTS' HOUSE DAY

Joe grabs his sister as she opens the car door.

PATTI

(furious)

I told her. I warned her. I was real clear. I told her if she mentioned church or rock and roll or marriage, I'd walk outta the room if I was in it, hang up the phone if I was on it. She can't bring up those subjects no more.

JOE

(calming her)

It was just prayer.

PATTI

That's her trick. Thought she could get away with it. No way. It's her or me. There's no middle ground.

JOE

It's her birthday. Patti.

PATTI

That's why I agreed to come--even though I knew she'd try to pull something like this.

CONTINUED

23 CONT'D.

JOE
She's getting old.

PATTI
Why I gotta be even stronger.
You can't open the door a crack,
give her an inch...

JOE
(joke cadence)
...and she takes a yard. Just
like crabgrass. Joke.

PATTI
(not amused, but
cooling down)
She's trying to destroy us, Joey.
Music is all that matters. One hour
on stage makes up for the other 23.

Joan and Benji appear at the front door. Benji, crying, clutches his grandmother's leg. Father watches from the living room, in silhouette.

Her mother's forlorn stare only agitates Patti more. Joe eases her into the driver's seat:

JOE
I better go back. I'll tell
her something.

PATTI
(sits)
I'm sure you will. You'll take
Benji back?

Joe nods as she starts the engine.

CUT TO:

24 INT. MIDWEST RUBBER RECLAIMING DAY

Joe sorts tires at his assigned spot on the conveyor. The coffee break buzzer sounds; the line stops.

Joe drops his earphones around his neck and walks off. He pulls out his notebook, jots something down. A voice calls to him:

YOUNG WORKER
Joe, you going to Peabody's
Friday night? Heavy Metal!

CONTINUED

24 CONT'D.

JOE

Anvil!

YOUNG WORKER

Balls to the walls!

Joe laughs as he walks into the washroom.

CUT TO:

25

INT.

WASHROOM

DAY

Joe punches the Borax dispenser, cleans his face and hands. Across the room, two young workers share a joint. SMITTIE, a heavysset worker about 38, steps next to him. He wears a green military jacket.

SMITTIE

Hey, Rasnick.

JOE

Hey, Smittie. What is this?
A Vietnam flashback?

SMITTIE

(doesn't laugh)

I got a brother-in-law that lives
on Oakhurst. You know that area?

JOE

A little.

SMITTIE

He got robbed Saturday night.
His tools worth about \$600.

JOE

That's a fuck, alright.

SMITTIE

You ripped him off. Somebody
recognized your car.

JOE

You got a police problem. tell
the police. It wasn't me. I
was at the Euc all night.

SMITTIE

Your sister wasn't.

JOE

Ask her.

CONTINUED

25 CONT'D.

SMITTIE

I did. She denied everything.

JOE

So tell the cops.

SMITTIE

I told my brother-in-law I'd take care of it. He doesn't want to go to the cops. He goes to the cops he doesn't get his tools back. He needs the tools for his part-time work.

JOE

Take it up with Patti.

SMITTIE

I'll take it up with Patti alright. I'll take it up with her in your driveway. She'll give me some bullshit then I'll break her arms, I'll break her goddamn face. That may give me some satisfaction, but it won't help my brother-in-law and sister. They need money, not satisfaction. You get it, asshole?

JOE

She's just a girl.

SMITTIE

Don't make no difference to them.

JOE

Give me 24 hours. Let me ask around. Maybe something can be done.

SMITTIE

Okay. The number was 600.

JOE

I ain't trying to negotiate.

CUT TO:

26

INT.

RANDALL PARK MALL

EVENING

Joe pushes an empty stroller as he and his mother pass a row of franchise stores. Benji wanders ahead and behind, always staying in sight.

The mall's two-story decor--fountains, ferns, pumice stone--creates an artificial mood. Overweight couples stroll to somnambulistic Muzak. Children run free.

CONTINUED

26

CONT'D.

A banner announces: "Come As Your Fantasy Air-Band Contest, Sat. 16th." Benji picks a shoe from a Florsheim display.

MOTHER

Put it back, Benji.

(to Joe)

I'm not that old, but I just don't like driving anymore.

JOE

(gets to the point)

We got a problem.

MOTHER

I thought it was something.

JOE

We need to borrow some money.
\$600.

Joan waits further explanation.

JOE

Patti got herself into some legal trouble. She needs \$600 to get out of it. I'll pay you back part each week.

MOTHER

You should ask your father.

JOE

He'd only ask you.

MOTHER

Don't make fun of him.

JOE

I wasn't.

MOTHER

He loves you kids.

JOE

Yes.

MOTHER

Where's Patti?

JOE

She'd never ask for help.

CONTINUED

MOTHER

Is she alright?

JOE

Yeah.

MOTHER

We don't have too much money saved...

JOE

I wouldn't ask if there was any other way.

Benji fishes a "goey worm" from a bowl on the Woolworth counter. Joe motions to the YOUNG CLERK:

JOE

Just let him have one.

Joe digs a dime from his jeans, pays for the worm. They continue.

MOTHER

I could get a clerking job at Christmas. We were thinking of going to Florida. Then somebody else wouldn't get Christmas work.

JOE

Mother, try to stay to the point.

MOTHER

(stern)

This is the point. Patti gets in trouble, you get in debt. Dad and I don't go to Florida, I work the holidays, another girl loses out on a part-time job, her kids don't get the special presents they wanted-- it's all connected. The hardship just gets passed from one person to the next.

JOE

Patti's in trouble. That's the point.

MOTHER

Why is Patti so special? We put away money for her to go to college. She drops out, fine. She gets pregnant by some stranger, fine. She won't say who, fine. She won't talk to her mother, fine. Whatever Patti wants.

CONTINUED

26

CONT'D.

Joan wipes her moist eyes.

JOE

Please.

MOTHER

I know you know who Benji's father is. You just won't tell me.

JOE

I don't know. I don't want to. I'm trying to live in the present.

MOTHER

Sorry. I'm being stupid. I just have to say these things every now and then.

(takes Joe's hand)

Of course I'll get the money. Maybe this will bring us all close again.

Joe studies his mother: to what degree are her feelings genuine? Calculated? He feels the screws tightening. His mother is already collecting emotional interest on her loan.

MOTHER

Don't you think it will?

JOE

(embraces her)

I'm sure it will.

He watches Benji playing at the fountain. Patti did the crime. Joe's doing the time.

CUT TO:

27

INT.

JOE'S ROOM

PREDAWN

The radio alarm goes off. Joe turns a sleepy head and looks: 6:00 a.m. Hard rock jumps out the speaker. The window's unshaded; it's dark.

Joe's room reflects eclectic tastes: an "Empire Burlesque" poster hung beside one from the Cleveland Art Museum. Magazines and paperbacks everywhere, temp lyrics pinned to the wall.

CUT TO:

28

EXT.

BU'S HOUSE

DAWN

Joe's Chevy waits as Bu exits, lunch pail in hand. Bu gets in; they drive off.

CUT TO:

29

EXT. MIDWEST RUBBER RECLAIMING MORNING

Joe locks the car as they get out. He double-checks a thick envelope in his pocket.

Young workers study a sign posted outside the gate. Older workers give a passing glance, enter.

Joe and Bu stop. The sign reads:

ATTENTION
Seasonal Layoffs
All temporary, part-time and
non-seniority employees please
report to the Employment Office.

BU

Damn.

Joe notices Smittie, hands him the envelope.

JOE

This is for your brother-in-law.

Smittie pockets the envelope unopened. He trusts Joe.

SMITTIE

Thanks.

(looks to sign)

Sorry. Sometimes I hear about
part-time stuff. House painting.
Maybe I can help out.

JOE

Yeah, thanks.

CUT TO:

30

INT. PATTI'S ROOM MORNING

Joe sits on the edge of Patti's bed, beer in hand. Patti rests against the headboard. Her room is undecorated, seemingly devoid of personality.

PATTI

I thought they were doing good?

JOE

They are--for somebody else. You
know, last hired, blah, blah. Bu
had only a month to go to get union.
Some banker scratches his ass and
we're on the street.

CONTINUED

30

CONT'D.

PATTI

Maybe there's something else.

JOE

Dream on.

Patti stretches out as if to sleep:

PATTI

Well, that settles it.

JOE

Settles what? You going to sleep?

PATTI

(turns over)

Settles that we're going on the road. We got a rep. We can get booked into bars in Erie, Akron, Mansfield. You got no job, Bu's got no job--let's get real.

Joe's immediately energized:

JOE

We got material...
(points to Patti)
We got sex...

PATTI

...we got a Peavey 16-chan, thank God...
(smiles)
...and me.

JOE

Bongo-boy?

PATTI

The youngest roadie.

CUT TO:

31

EXT.

JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE

DAY

A yard sale. Patti and Billy sit midst a miscellany of used equipment and clothes. Benji entertains a potential customer.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. CAR LOT DAY

Joe and Bu barter with a CAR SALESMAN over a used van.
Joe hypes the Nova and Bu's motorcycle.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. PARENTS' HOUSE DAY

Another day. Joe waves goodbye to his parents on the porch,
hops in the newly purchased Econoline.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. INTERSTATE 90 DAY

The white van speeds through afternoon drizzle toward
Pennsylvania. In the distance, Lake Erie blends into the
overcast panorama.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. "EMERGENCY ROOM" EARLY EVENING

The van's parked alongside The Emergency Room, a rock club
in an Erie "shopping center." The once-thriving strip
is now just another half-occupied urban eyesore.

Gene, Billy and Bu lug primer-black JBLs out of the van.
Benji sits atop Bu's shoulders.

CUT TO:

36 INT. "EMERGENCY ROOM" EARLY EVENING

Patti and Joe crowd around the MANAGER, 40, an overweight, long-
haired hippie throwback. Comic relief.

E.R. MANAGER

I didn't know if you'd make it.

PATTI

What do you mean? We're a road
band now.

E.R. MANAGER

So I heard.

JOE

225 against 3, 50% of the door. Two
sets, 9:45 to 2. Drinks half price.

CONTINUED

36 CONT'D.

E.R. MANAGER
Wait a sec. Where'd you get those numbers? I never guarantee more than 175 to an unrecorded band.

The Manager bangs his belly to the bar, regains his balance.

PATTI
That's what you quoted on the phone. The Frenchmen get 250 here.

E.R. MANAGER
The Frenchmen are hot poo here.

PATTI
So are we.

E.R. MANAGER
You're hot poo in Cleveland, you're warm piss here.

JOE
Hey, let's not get nasty. I know the Sixties musta been rough.

E.R. MANAGER
175. Drinks half price for band only.

JOE
We got one Roadie.

E.R. MANAGER
He pays full. House policy.

Patti throws her eyes heavenward, turns away.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. "EMERGENCY ROOM" EARLY EVENING

Bu and Gene share a cigarette as Billy dances with Benji.

BU
This club's been around a long time. I came here junior high to hear the Rasberries. It was the White Rabbit then. After that... Billy? What was this place called before it was the Emergency Room?

CONTINUED

37 CONT'D.

BILLY
The Mersey Beat.

Patti joins them; Benji runs to her side.

PATTI
Count to a hundred. Joe's having a
hassle with the local El Jerko.

BU
The retard hippie? The one that
always says "Ciao"?

BILLY
Buddy Hacket with brains.

PATTI
That's him.

BU
What was this place called before
Mersey Beat?

PATTI
It was never the Mersey Beat. The
Mersey Beat was in Youngstown. This
was The Wall.

BU
Not The Wall, just--

Joe bounces out of the club:

JOE
Hey, let's load out. We got
a gig to play.

PATTI
Verdict?

JOE
200 flat--but Patti and
Benji get a free room next
door. The rest of us will
crash in the van.

Bu, Gene and Billy exchange glances.

CONTINUED

37 CONT'D.

BILLY

Gee, Joe, you gotta be the whitest man I ever worked for.

JOE

Patti don't go on till B-boy's asleep. Gene, you check on him every half hour. We can improvise a mix.

Joe scoops up Benji, spins him around. Benji squeals with delight.

JOE

"If you can't lower heaven, raise Hell!"

CUT TO:

38 EXT. RATSKELLER NIGHT

WINTER. Kalamazoo, Mich. Six months later.

The Ratskeller, a suburban club between Shakey's and Kentucky Fried, sits on a four-lane running from Western Michigan U. The marquee advertises: "Fri-Sat: From Cleveland--The Barbusters."

Snow has been plowed into a three-foot banks alongside the highway. Cars idle in the crowded parking lot; exhaust billows past the club.

We follow FOUR SOPHMORES as they jump from their car, slap the cold away and high-step through the snow. The winter wind hits ankle-level, slicing chills through their spines. They laugh and roughhouse as they approach.

CUT TO:

39 INT. RATSKELLER NIGHT

The door flies open. The students are hit by a forcefield of smoke, noise and steam heat. The impact is electric. POV: the First Sophomore strains to see through his steamy glasses.

On stage, the Barbusters are going full blast. Joe finishes a power chord as Patti belts out the vocal, bouncing the balls of her feet to the beat. She wears Harlequin shades and Bundeswehr tank top. They debut a new song: a hard 4/4 Dave Edmunds-style rocker. Patti's right: one hour like this makes up for the other 23.

CONTINUED

39

CONT'D.

On the dance floor, the sophmores mix with preppies and townies. All across the room, horny undergrads are getting drunk, screaming for women and acting stupid.

For a quarter patrons can test their sobriety on a wall-mounted "Breathalyzer." Students wait in an unsteady line, each hoping to be the most drunk. FIRST STUDENT: "Hey, Stupid." SECOND STUDENT: "My name ain't Stupid, it's Bob." FIRST STUDENT: "I call 'em like I see 'em."

SEAN, Patti's loser boyfriend, 20, a recent acquisition, watches from the edge of the stage. At first glance, he's sexy and cool; on second look, he's as disposable as Kleenex.

Patti's hot tonight. All alone, in a world of her own, she sings of work, freedom, mother, father.

CUT TO:

40

EXT.

RED ROOF INN

DAY

They pull into a no-frills motel on the outskirts of Flint. Dirty snow and rock salt streak the van's exterior.

CUT TO:

41

INT.

SUPERMARKET

DAY

Joe, Patti and her loser b.f. push their shopping cart through a well-lit supermarket. Benji rides in the cart.

Patti holds Sean's arm as Joe drops a box of detergent into the cart.

The wear of the last six months shows on their faces. Even Benji seems disoriented. Joe glances at Sean: Joe's p.o.-ed in general, he's particularly pissed at this freeloader who vies for Patti and Benji's attention. Just another emotion he has to swallow.

PATTI

Four days one gig. Seems like home.

JOE

Softener?

PATTI

No.

JOE

Get some hash and eggs.

(to Sean)

Get some bleach.

CONTINUED

41 CONT'D.

The boyfriend doesn't respond.

JOE
Get some bleach, please.

SEAN
Huh?

JOE
(snotty)
Bleach. Bottle. Put in cart.
Please.

SEAN
My name's Sean.

JOE
Sean, please. I try not to ask
too much of you. I know how hard
it is hanging around like a lapdog.

PATTI
(curt)
Stop it. Just back off, Joey.
Take the scenic route.

Joe shrugs an apology.

SEAN
(sincere)
It's okay.

Joe double-takes: is this guy snide or just dumb? Joe settles
on dumb.

JOE
I shoulda called home weeks ago.
I'll do it now. Anything you
want to say?

PATTI
No.

JOE
(walks off)
Don't forget the hash and eggs.

He waves to Benji as he turns to the aisle. Joe finds a pay
phone, places a collect call.

Joe looks around as the call goes through. His side of the
conversation consists mostly of nods and noncommittal
acknowledgements: "Yes," "No," "Soon," "Fine." He hangs up.

CONTINUED

41 CONT'D.

He sets off to find the others. Turning a corner, Joe spots them at the meat counter.

He stops dead in his tracks, steps back. He sees:

Patti and Sean, using Benji as a decoy, tuck steaks into their waistbands. Sean entertains Benji with comic expressions as he slips a small steak under the child's sweatshirt. They move down the aisle.

Joe composes himself, walks beside them.

PATTI

You call?

JOE

Yeah. Mom was sick for a couple days but's alright now. They cancelled Florida.

PATTI

Dad?

JOE

You know. Got on the phone. Asked how we were. I said fine. He said something about the weather, gave the phone back to Mom.

They head toward the check-out counters.

JOE

You get the hash?

PATTI

It's there. You need a haircut. I'll cut it.

(looks closer)

You're getting grey.

JOE

I am not.

PATTI

(touches his hair)

I guess not.

Patti and Sean unload the cart, each careful not to bend too far. She studies Joe's hair from one angle, then another:

PATTI

Must just be some dust or powder.

CONTINUED

41 CONT'D.

Now Joe's the decoy. The CHECK-OUT GIRL rings up their groceries. Joe looks Patti in the eye:

JOE
Isn't there something you forgot?

PATTI
No. What?

Joe examines her face for a trace of guilt, anxiety: none. Benji touches his stomach:

BENJI
Mom, it's cold.

PATTI
You're fine.
(to Sean)
Why don't you warm up the van?
(to Benji)
Just be quiet.

Sean exits as the Check-Out Girl totals the bill: \$38.19. Joe hesitates, pulls out his money. Benji, frightened, looks at Joe.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. RED ROOF INN DAY

Snow falls outside the one-story row of rooms.

CUT TO:

43 INT. RED ROOF INN DAY

Band instruments and equipment are stacked in the cinder block room. Billy and Gene sit on one double bed; Bu plays with Benji on the other. Billy sips a beer as he watches silent TV. Gene--sans wrist cast--reads Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

Patti waits on a hot plate. Killing time, she improves the "Patty Duke Show" theme to a rock beat: "Meet Cathy who's lived most everywhere, from Zanzibar to Barclay Square." Billy and Bu join in.

Joe, in the chair, goes over expenses:

JOE
Here's what she wrote. It ain't much. Slow week. Three travel days plus the flat.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

43

CONT'D.

JOE contd
(reads)

We grossed 850. 50 van payment.
80 gas. 25 bar fund. 30 for the
tire. 110 groceries. 25 Chinese
dinner. 260 Motel Hell. That leaves
280, \$56 each.

Joe distributes the money. Each counts his share, pockets it. Bu stands, pulls on his down jacket and gloves:

BU

I'm gonna call my baby. Maybe
we can talk about what she wants
for Christmas.

JOE

Is that a complaint?

BU

No.

BILLY

Tell Cindy to say Hi to my parents.

GENE

Mine too.

BU

Will do.

PATTI

Come back soon.

A winter breeze swirls through the room as Bu leaves.

JOE

Winter's a bitch. Summer everybody
can spread out, sleep in the van,
on the grass.

GENE

I think this is the greatest book
ever written.

BILLY

What is it?

GENE

Believe It Or Not.

BILLY

Get off it.

CONTINUED

43

CONT'D.

GENE

I'm serious, man. You just think about it.

BILLY

What's with the franks, Patti? I'm hungry.

Patti does a theatrical turn, walks to the door:

PATTI

No "Injun dogs" tonight. I got a special surprise.

She sticks her head out the door, calls to Sean.

The van door SLAMS. Her boyfriend proudly enters with three stolen steaks, hands them to Patti. She holds them up:

PATTI

A special treat. I've been saving up. It's a thank you.

Gene and Billy applaud. Joe just stares at her. Sean bends to pick up Benji:

SEAN

Whatja think, Benj, you little secret weapon?

Joe's voice is ice and anger:

JOE

Don't you touch him. Don't you ever touch him.

(Patti protests)

You shut up.

PATTI

What?

JOE

(still sitting)

You are such a low life bitch.

PATTI

What is this?

JOE

You've done some low shit, but this tops it...

(MORE)

CONTINUED

JOE contd

(stands, faces Sean)

...and you, loser, better get your loser ass out of here as fast as your loser legs can take you. I've seen just about enough of you fucking around my family. Get going and don't stop. You're interferin' our conversation.

Sean, trembling, turns to Patti--no support there--then heads out. The boy's spine is made of mush. Patti doesn't react; she didn't care much for him anyway.

Joe turns his anger to Patti:

JOE

Do what you want with your life, but Benji ain't just yours. He's mine--and Mom and Dad's and his own too.

PATTI

(drops steaks)

What bullshit is this?

JOE

You gotta use a four year-old to boost steaks from a supermarket?

PATTI

I don't know what you're talking about. I bought those steaks.

JOE

Shut your lying mouth.

Patti counterattacks:

PATTI

You got a real 'tude, little brother. Maybe we ought to start a band just for you. Call it the "Attitudes."

This is getting thick. Gene buries his head in a pillow.
Billy stands:

BILLY

I gotta take a piss.

CONTINUED

43

CONT'D.

JOE
Take Benji with you.
(to Benji)
Go on, son.

Benji walks over to Billy; they slip into the bathroom. Patti turns back to Joe:

PATTI
Excuse me, I didn't know you were above stealing food to eat. You get converted?

JOE
What you gonna do next? Turn him out? I hear there's big bucks in child porn.

Patti goes white. Her face blank, her voice calm:

PATTI
You bastard. You're even worse than the rest of them.

She strides out. Doesn't bother to take her jacket. Gene peeks from under his pillow.

CUT TO:

44

INT.

FLINT BAR

DAY

Bu finds Patti in a neighborhood club. A half-dozen regulars sit along the bar. The tables and stage are empty.

Patti stands in a corner, practicing guitar chords. Bu walks over, says something. Jukebox metal drowns out their conversation.

CUT TO:

45

EXT.

RED ROOF MOTEL

DAY

Patti and Bu get out of the van, walk to the room.

CUT TO:

46

INT.

RED ROOF MOTEL

DAY

They enter.

PATTI
Benji?

She checks the closet, looks under the bed.

CONTINUED

46 CONT'D.

Billy watches silent TV from the other bed. Patti turns to him.

BILLY
They split.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE DAY

The van stands outside. The driveway hasn't been shoveled; snow covers the yard, sidewalk and steps.

Footsteps lead to the porch. Patti bangs on the screen door. The house is dark.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. PARENTS' HOUSE DAY

The van is parked on the freshly shoveled drive. Christmas wreath on door. Patti walks to the door, rings buzzer.

Joe cracks open the storm door. He wears a faded flannel shirt and silver earring.

PATTI
Let me in. Where's Benji?

Joe doesn't answer.

PATTI
Look, I'm sorry. Let me in.
It's cold out here.

He opens the door for her.

CUT TO:

49 INT. PARENTS' ENTRANCEWAY DAY

Patti stomps snow from her boots, removes her jacket. A Christmas tree stands decorated in the living room.

PATTI
Where's Benji?

JOE
He's with Mom.

PATTI
Would you get him?

CONTINUED

49 CONT'D.

JOE
You go. They're in the den. I
didn't tell her a thing.

Patti drapes her motorcycle jacket over a chair, heads toward
the den. Joe follows.

A daytime soap echoes from the "family room." Joe waits in
the kitchen as Patti enters.

CUT TO:

50 INT. DEN DAY

Benji and Joan look up as Patti enters. Benji runs to her;
Patti kneels to embrace him.

PATTI
Hi, Mom.

Mother says nothing. The tension builds; Patti turns to her:

PATTI
(brittle)
What is it now? I mean, you
usually have so much to say.

Her tone frightens Benji; he returns to his grandmother.

MOTHER
Benji already said enough.

PATTI
Said enough what?

MOTHER
You know--but maybe you should
hear from a 4 year-old's point of
view. Being lugged around place to
place in a van. Waking up with no one
to talk to. What do you think he is,
a suitcase?

PATTI
I'm leaving. Let's go, Benji.

Benji doesn't budge.

MOTHER
Reverend Huevel says you should see
a counselor. I want you to speak
to him.

CONTINUED

50 CONT'D.

PATTI

(incredulous)

You took my problems to a minister?
How could you? What does he have to
do with anything?

CUT TO:

51 INT. KITCHEN DAY

Joe, listening against the fridge, sighs.

CUT TO:

52 INT. DEN DAY

MOTHER

(stern)

It's not going to be so easy this
time. You're going to have to prove
yourself. From what I see you're no
fit mother--or wife. Or sister. Or--

PATTI

I am Benji's mother--and since when
are you an authority on fit mothers?

Joe intervenes, takes Patti's arm:

JOE

Com'on Sis. You're tired. You
look damn near dead. This can wait.
Get some rest.

PATTI

I won't stay in this house.

JOE

Let's go downstairs and have a
beer. Com'on.

Joe edges a reluctant Patti out the door. Benji stays with
his grandmother.

CUT TO:

53 INT. BASEMENT STUDY DAY

Patti curls up on a worn sofa in the study, an unfinished room
lined with religious books. A humidifier hums beside an old desk.

Joe enters with two cold beers, unsnaps one then the other, wipes
the foam on his jeans. He hands Patti a beer as he sits beside her.

CONTINUED

53 CONT'D.

JOE

You want a neck massage?

Patti shakes her head, "no," takes a swig. Joe lets the silence settle in.

PATTI

(to herself)

Benji can't stay here. Not with her.

(a beat)

I really love Benji, you know.

JOE

I know.

PATTI

I admit I ain't been the best mother. That thing in Michigan was real stupid. Sorry. I could have had an abortion. Mom would have never found out. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I had--I'm a damn good singer, Joey.

JOE

You are.

PATTI

Then I look at Benji and get so full of feelings and just want to hit myself for thinking that way. I was so young. I wanted something that was mine, something she had no part of. I was so sick of this house, this furniture, those calenders...

(sniffs)

...this Air-Wick--some reasons, huh? I thought a baby would change everything.

(Joe walks to desk)

Where were you then?

JOE

(light)

Mom said I had to pray for you so I asked God: "Make Mom leave you alone."

PATTI

So much for prayer. You'd be surprised if you knew who the father was.

CONTINUED

53 CONT'D.

JOE

You said you didn't know.

Patti smirks; neither believes this convenient falsehood.

PATTI

It was somebody Mom respected--an "older" man, like maybe thirty--from the church. That woulda killed her, but I still wouldn't tell. I couldn't give her that control over me.

JOE

Benji's your son. Let it go at that.

Patti stands, punches thin air. Turns calm:

PATTI

I just get so angry. Everybody's always getting on ya, telling you what to do, what to be. You're in an open coffin. If you show any emotion, smile, even give 'em that much...

(falls back on sofa)

...Wham! Down comes the lid. We gotta stick together.

Joe steps to the shelves, tries to lighten mood:

JOE

Like all these books. Mom bought them all cause she wanted Dad to be a minister. But he couldn't read them. They were over his head. They were over her head. I'd sit down here for hours. She was so proud. Told all her friends. But then she found out I was reading Foxe's martyr book, all the persecutions, tortures of the Early Christians...

PATTI

(laughs)

...innocent maidens raped by Evil Rome...

JOE

(laughs)

...that was the end of my religious training.

PATTI

I was thinking.

CONTINUED

53 CONT'D.

JOE

What?

PATTI

The band sucks. Got no get, no punch. We gotta tighten up when we get back on the road. We gotta attack: fist in the face. Reverb, staccato repeats, metal riffs.

(air-guitars)

Fur-ther out.

JOE

(takes another beer)

Metal? I wasn't even a metalhead when everybody else was a metalhead.

PATTI

Not just metal. A new sound, like-- techno-pop metal. Pure noise. Blast through the walls. You can play it and the lyrics are no problem.

JOE

Metal ain't got lyrics.

PATTI

(flirty)

That's what I mean. Whatja think?

Joe doesn't care for metal. He shrugs.

PATTI

Huh?

JOE

(reluctant)

Okay.

PATTI

Okay what?

JOE

Okay, I'm thinking about it.

CUT TO:

54

EXT.

CLEVELAND MUSIC HALL

NIGHT

A municipal fortress overlooking Lake Erie. Built in 1928 as a showcase for art and culture, it now features wrestling matches, RV conventions and rock and roll.

A nationally known rock group headlines.

CUT TO:

55 INT. MUSIC HALL NIGHT

On stage, the headline rockers wail. The teenage crowd is on its feet, fists raised high. Their wardrobe is standard-issue rock and roll: jeans and slogan shirts.

Bu and Cindy stand next to Joe and CRYSTAL, Joe's date, 17, a busty blond airhead. They cheer, sing in unison.

CUT TO:

56 INT. LOBBY NIGHT

Intermission. Bu and Joe squeeze through the rowdy crowd. Cindy and Crystal follow.

They pass a row of tables as highschoolers hawk rock wares: T-shirts, posters, photo albums. The marble lobby echoes with teen energy.

Joe and Bu collect beer cups, distribute them; they continue toward the restrooms.

JOE

Good crowd.

BU

Good as tits.

CINDY

(to Crystal)

Like the set?

CRYSTAL

It was freezy. I mean,
for a second, total t-zone.

Bu turns to Joe sotto voce:

BU

Where'd you meet Miss West
Virginia?

JOE

Not bad, huh? Checked my brain
at the door.

BU

Right next to my self respect. All
set she's been banging me with those
bazookas. Up, down...

(rubs crotch)

Cindy's gonna get one hell of a fuck
outta this.

(changing subject)

Look, they're rehiring at the plant.
I got notified cause of my time.
What do you think?

CONTINUED

56 CONT'D.

JOE
What about the Barbusters?

BU
Tell you the truth, I got approached
by a lounge act in Maple Heights,
the No Exits. Guaranteed 400 for
Friday and Saturday.

JOE
(appalled)
Jesus, Bu, they're a Top 40
band. You might as well be
working in the factory.

BU
I'm doing that too. My baby ran
up a lotta bills when we were on
the road. We need money.

JOE
But Top 40?

BU
(corrects him)
"E-asy listening."

JOE
(overlaps)
Oh my God.

BU
Who's talking Top 40? You're
lead guitar. You think these kids
give a damn who plays bass? I just
stand in back there...
(pantomimes guitar)
You don't see the bass player's face
on MTV--more like his fingers.

The couples reach the restrooms, split up.

CUT TO:

57 INT. MEN'S JOHN NIGHT

Joe and Bu wait their turn at a urinal trough.

BU
It's time I reminded Cindy what my
face looks like. I ain't gonna
fuck up this marriage. It's not like
the Barbusters where exactly going anywhere.

CONTINUED

57 CONT'D.

JOE
What about the others?

BU
I heard Billy's looking for a better gig. Gene's old man's trying to get him day work. I could mention you to the No Exits.

They step up the the trough.

JOE
No, for me it's the Barbusters or nothing. Maybe I should put my name in at the plant.

BU
I'm way ahead of you. I put it in with mine.

CUT TO:

58 EXT. JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE NIGHT

Joe opens the door for Crystal.

CUT TO:

59 INT. LIVING ROOM NIGHT

Inside, a surprise awaits. Patti has packed their clothes and stacked the suitcases with the band equipment.

Joe stops short, slowly closes the door. Crystal doesn't realize something's amiss.

Patti enters, dressed in black slacks and leather.

PATTI
Great, you're here.

JOE
What's going on?

CRYSTAL
(extends her hand)
I'm Chris. Crystal, really.

Patti, enthused, starts to explain:

CONTINUED

59 CONT'D.

PATTI

I've been on the phone all night. There was an ad in Scene: a Columbus metal group needs a girl to front for them. They're a guitar short--maybe we could talk Bu in, too. They already know us. We audition tomorrow and if it works out we could be gigging in three weeks. They're ragged but, you and me, we'll put the screws to 'em.

Joe tries to remain calm.

JOE

What group is this?

PATTI

The Hunz. H-U-N-Z.

CRYSTAL

Ick. I saw them. They're all greasy with stringy hair and their chests open. It's like they try not to get tan.

PATTI

That's them.

(to Joe)

Joe, you've outdone yourself.

He ignores Patti's remark:

JOE

If I was you, I'd give some thought to unpacking.

PATTI

If I was you, I'd mind my own business--and start working your riffs.

JOE

This is my business: I'm not going.

CRYSTAL

(confused)

Joe?

Patti turns on the hapless teen:

CONTINUED

PATTI

And what did he tell you, Chris?
Did he tell you about his sensitive
soul? Did he get around to his
suicidal fantasies--that's a good
come-on. Or did he just say he liked
your personality? Your "pep?"

(pause)

Crystal: curfew time.

Crystal turns to Joe; she no longer exists for him.

CRYSTAL

(lost)

I don't have a ride.

PATTI

Boo!

Crystal flees, slamming the door. Patti and Joe are alone.

JOE

I ain't goin, Bu ain't goin, you
ain't goin.

PATTI

Well, well, they finally got to you.
Welcome to the lineup: Mom, Rev.
Huevel, the whole gang. Everybody
telling Patti what she can do. Aren't
you ashamed? There's a mirror in the
john if you dare to look at it.

Joe, chastised, backs off:

JOE

What about Benji?

PATTI

Already packed.

JOE

Go--with my blessing--

PATTI

I will--

JOE

Blow out the fucking walls. But
you ain't taking Bongo. He ain't
going on the road again. Not with
some metal band.

CONTINUED

59

CONT'D.

PATTI

He's my son. Remember?

JOE

He's staying here.

PATTI

With you?

JOE

Um-hmm.

PATTI

And with Mom?

JOE

If necessary.

PATTI

What's your problem? You want to be so good someday you never have to shit? Benji comes with me.

Joe flops Benji's Smurf suitcase on the sofa, opens it.

PATTI

He ain't staying with her!

Joe tosses out pint-sized clothes.

JOE

He ain't going on the road!

PATTI

Well, I am, and you or nobody else can stop me!

JOE

Go!

Patti tries to repack Benji's clothes.

PATTI

A mother has rights! Any court will tell you that!

They struggle over a pair of preschool jeans.

JOE

I don't need to hear no court! Leave if you want! Benji's staying!

Patti pushes Joe, he pushes back.

CONTINUED

59 CONT'D.

Furious, she picks up a guitar stand, cracks him across the back. Whack!

Joe winces, reflexively spins, smacks Patti in the face. Pow! Patti howls. Blood from her nose.

They both freeze. Stand shaking, terrified. Their eyes wide open. They've never been this far: what happens next?

Benji, crying, sleepy, starts down the stairs.

BENJI

Mom?

Joe runs, sweeps Benji up, presses the boy's face against his chest.

JOE

Bongo, don't cry. It's alright.

Joe carries Benji out the door. Doesn't look back.

CUT TO:

60

INT.

COLUMBUS BAR

DAY

Patti auditions for the Hunz. The walls are gilded with graffiti.

The five-piece group in standard metal gear: open leather vests, spiked belts and bracelets, pants slung to the pubic area. Devoid of make-up, under white light, their faces range from ordinary to unattractive, a catalogue of dermatological ailments.

Heavy Metal music is a world unto itself: an ethos aimed at pubescent teens, it stands apart from mainstream rock. Underneath their anti-social extravagances, however, Metal musicians are astute entrepreneurs: the Hunz study Patti like stock brokers.

CONTINUED

60 CONT'D.

Patti has put together a piecemeal metal melange: motorcycle jacket, bicycle chain necklace, green eye shadow. No matter: when she leans into the mike, her voice's metal to the max. The Hunz has found its front girl.

Patti radiates behind the mike. She is confident, relaxed-free.

CUT TO:

61 MONTAGE

A drumbeat begins over the previous scene, segues to the Barbusters' "Night of the Werewolf" instrumental. Time passes.

--The Hunz bus speeds down the snowy Interstate.

--Joan, Benjamin and Benji exit church, tip-toe across the icy sidewalk.

--Gene applies for a computer course.

--Joe and Bu work at Midwest Rubber Reclaiming.

--Mother and Benji browse the mall.

--Billy backs up bubblegummers at the Etc.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. MIDWEST RUBBER RECLAIMING DAY

SUMMER. The whistle blows. Young workers dash from the plant, jump in their cars and squeal out of the lot.

Joe and Bu climb in Joe's Toyota pickup. Bu's grown a beard.

CUT TO:

63 INT. TOYOTA DAY

Bu, dirty from work, lights up a joint.

JOE
Where'd you get that?

BU
Steve Dunn. Here.
(passes it)
Want some?

CONTINUED

63 CONT'D.

JOE
 (takes a hit)
 How much?

BU
 A buck. Bolinas, he says.

Joe coughs, double-takes.

BU
 Bolinas, Ohio.
 (laugh)
 You wanna stop at the Euc?

JOE
 Can't. Gotta buy my mom a present.
 It's her birthday. What you doing?

BU
 Rehearsin. Oh, I didn't tell you
 cause it wasn't sure yet. I'm
 joining a new group--a Motown cover
 band, but damn good. Seven-piece...
 (humming "My Girl")
 ...this white chick does terrific
 Smokey imitations.

JOE
 (out the window)
 Look, they're tearing down the
 old Pick-n-Save.

BU
 ...they're playing lounges now but
 they could really break out.

JOE
 Money?

BU
 Worse, but if I play "Yesterday"
 one more time my hand's gonna fall
 off. Forget the brain damage.

JOE
 What does Cindy think?

BU
 She's trying to get pregnant--and
 that's not so easy either. So it's
 the same old quiz show: take the money
 or spin the wheel? This time I ain't
 even trying to figure it out. We'll
 be playing the airport Sheraton. You
 oughtta come. No butts or babies.

CONTINUED

JOE

I've gotta get a date. My mom's been bugging me about dating, you know, so I say maybe and she sets me up--can you believe this? My own mother! At the beauty parlor! And--surprise--who do you think with? Susie Eager. "Meager Eager."

BU

--cold night in Frostbite Falls...

JOE

(overlapping)
...Polish bowling ball...

BU

(overlapping)
...douches Oven Fresh.

JOE

So I told my Mom I already had a date. Now I gotta get one.

CUT TO:

INT.

PARENTS' KITCHEN

EVENING

Joan, Joe and Benji wash dishes at the sink. Benji stands on a stool, wiping and rewiping a plate. Joe leans right to left, doing most the work. Mother's concentration comes and goes.

A birthday cake and unwrapped presents (slippers and a paperback) stand on the dining table. A year's past since the opening of the film.

MOTHER

I thought you were bringing a friend?

JOE

I don't think so. You know, it's nice in a way doing dishes by hand. Like old times. What's wrong with the dishwasher?

MOTHER

Don't be stupid. We don't have a dishwasher.

JOE

Huh?

BENJI

(points)
It's right there, Gram.

CONTINUED

MOTHER
(looking)

It just makes so much noise.

JOE
(finishing)

Anyway, it's good for Benji. He probably never knew you could do dishes by hand, hey Bongo-boy?

(takes Benji's plate)

So you learned something new. You can go play now.

Joe stacks plates as Benji climbs off the stool.

JOE
Change your clothes first--and don't leave the yard!

MOTHER
I'd think a young man your age would have all the girls after him.

JOE
I got girlfriends.

MOTHER
You can't get married without girlfriends. Benji needs a mother. Who knows who the father--?

JOE
(cuts her short)
We don't discuss Patti--never. Sit down a second. I've got a surprise for you.

Joe sets her in a chair.

MOTHER
You already gave me a birthday present.

JOE
This is a second one.

He opens the buffet drawer, hands her an envelope:

JOE
It's the final payment on your loan. A little late, but there it is.

MOTHER
(tears up)
You're my pride and joy, Joe. I'm so glad God gave me two children.

CUT TO:

65

INT.

DEN

EVENING

Joe steps into the den, closes the door. His father, surprised, looks up from his chair. A baseball game plays on television.

FATHER

Joe?

JOE

(sits on sofa)

Hi, Dad.

FATHER

You can turn it off. I wasn't watching.

JOE

What's wrong with the dishwasher? Mom says it makes too much noise.

FATHER

It always makes too much noise.

JOE

But it's not broke?

FATHER

She gets confused.

A patriotic beer commercial on TV.

FATHER

You know she really enjoys having you around to talk to. I never really know what to say. I wanted to talk to Patti, too, you know, when she was having problems, but I didn't know what to say to her either. I guess I don't understand women much.

JOE

You just say what you feel.

FATHER

You make it sound easy.

JOE

(sits forward)

Mother seems to be getting worse. You know what I mean?

FATHER

She gets confused. She has a bad day now and then, nothing serious. A couple weeks ago she went around turning on all the lights.

CONTINUED

65 CONT'D.

JOE
There's a disease called
Alzheimer's. It's when--

Father, hard, cuts his son short:

FATHER
I know what Alzheimer's is.

JOE
(cautious)
And?

FATHER
(passive)
I've been thinking about it.
I talked to the doctor at work.
He gave me a pamphlet.

JOE
Has she seen a doctor?

FATHER
What could a doctor do? She's
fine most of the time. Maybe it's
nothing. Why should she know before
she has to?

JOE
Shouldn't you discuss it with her?

FATHER
(hesitates)
I suppose. I just don't want to
upset her. You know, we got a good
life. We don't talk much or much else
and I can't really remember why we ever
got married, but I can't complain either.
(a beat)
She gave me faith. What else is there?

CUT TO:

66 EXT.

PLAYGROUND

DAY

Joe watches with a group of fellow "mothers" as their pre-schoolers circle, playing "Clap and Sing." The fenced playground stands on a wedge-shaped lot.

Benji, restless, looks at his uncle; Joe's stare keeps him in check. LAURIE, a coed play instructor, 22, calls to the children:

CONTINUED

66

CONT'D.

LAURIE
Boys and girls! Who wants to sing
next?

Benji jumps up and down:

BENJI
"Maneater"! "Maneater"!

Benji checks for Joe's approval. Joe slumps, power-chords an imaginary guitar, mouths "Maneater." The Play Instructor counters with a reproving stare. Joe gestures a sheepish "Sorry." He calls to Benji:

JOE
Bongo-boy! Sing the "Name the
Instruments" song!

Benji starts the Sesame Street tune, naming the instruments as he imitates them.

Joe turns to the YOUNG MOTHER beside him:

JOE
(proud)
He's got this song down cold.

YOUNG MOTHER
I think it's wonderful when fathers
come to the playgroup. It's good
for all the kids.

JOE
I had the day off.

YOUNG MOTHER
You couldn't get my husband here.
I tried to get him to take Lamaze.
The instructor said, "If you were
man enough to be there when the baby
was conceived, you should be man
enough to be there when it's born."
He said, "If I was drunk when it was
conceived, can I be drunk when it's
born?" And he was. How about you?
You take Lamaze?

JOE
(nods)
Loved it. Met my second wife there.
(her jaw drops)
I'm going again.

CONTINUED

66

CONT'D.

The Young Mother is speechless. Joe grimaces: goofed again. He can't seem to fit in the playgroup set:

JOE
Just kidding.

The Play Instructor applauds as Benji finishes--and rightly so: Bongo was quite impressive. Beaming, he runs to Joe.

The Instructor smiles as Joe whirls Benji in the air.

CUT TO:

67

INT.

SHERATON INN

NIGHT

Bu plays bass as the FLASHNIGHTS, his new group, perform the Miracles' hit, "Second That Emotion." A mini-skirted blond sings the lead; two thirtiesish black males back her up. Bu was right: the Flashnights are damn good. But good for what?

The "North Coast" lounge offers familiar unthreatening decor: laminated wood tables, canvas chairs, potted trees and a salad bar.

Benji sits between Joe and Laurie, the play instructor, at a table against the wall. Joe and the instructor exchange furtive glances; both seem uncomfortable. First date, second thoughts: thank God for Benji and the band.

Off the playground, Laurie, overdressed, seems congenitally middlebrow. She's neither stupid nor unattractive, just out of her element. Joe relaxes, cool in a faded "Cleveland Rocks" T-shirt.

They applaud as the band breaks.

LAURIE
She was just terrific! I loved it. If you closed your eyes, you'd think she was black.

(Joe smiles)
Between classes and work I never get out--particularly to places like this. It's like another world.

CONTINUED

67

CONT'D.

JOE
It is. It's a Sheraton Inn.

LAURIE
(laughs)
You like it, Benji?

Benji raises his tiny fist like a rocker.

LAURIE
(checks her watch)
When does he have to be back?

JOE
Don't worry about Bongo.

Bu and ROGER, one of the black back-ups, approach. Joe waves.

BENJI
Uncle Bu!

BU
Five, Benj.
(they touch hands)
So what you think?

JOE
Real tight--good set. Hello,
Roger. Laurie, this is Bu. Roger.

They exchange greetings.

JOE
Laurie's Benji's pre-school
instructor. She goes to Cleveland
State.

LAURIE
I thought you guys were great.

ROGER
When was the last time I saw you?
What group you with now?

JOE
Nobody. Just doing some lyrics.
(gestures)
Sit down. You get house drinks?

BU
(sitting)
Ha!

CONTINUED

67

CONT'D.

JOE

Next round on me.

ROGER

I saw something about Patti in The Scene. They're in Akron next week. How's she doing?

Benji perks up at the mention of Patti's name. Joe censors him with a glance.

JOE

Don't know.

ROGER

I hear she made them almost good.

LAURIE

Who's Patti?

JOE

Bongo's mother.

LAURIE

Oh.

JOE

My sister.

LAURIE

Oh.

JOE

(to Roger)

Didn't you used to be in the Frightz? A punk group?

ROGER

They sure came and went.

The instructor stands, straightens her skirt:

LAURIE

Excuse me, I'll be right back.

(to Bu and Roger)

Nice meeting you.

She caresses Benji's head as she walks off. Benji's unresponsive. Bu waits till she's out of earshot:

BU

Nice girl. You think she'll come back?

CONTINUED

67 CONT'D.

JOE
Give me a little room, garbage
mouth. I'm trying to improve myself.

Bu yells to a cocktail waitress:

BU
Hey, turkey tits! A little
service, please.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. AKRON AGORA NIGHT

The converted playhouse marquee screams: "Monster
Metalmania: Gates of Purgatory, The Hunz, B-Balls."

The crowd has begun to exit. Joe, in black T-shirt and jeans,
elbows his way inside.

CUT TO:

69 INT. AGORA NIGHT

Joe walks across the ballroom floor, acclimating his eyes
to the dark interior. The last set has just finished. On
stage, the B-Balls, dressed head-to-toe in red rubber, off-
load their equipment.

A Twisted Sister video plays on monitors above the bar. The
music is a physical assault: 90% vibration, 10% melody. Joe
buys a draft as he asks the bartender a question. He continues
toward the rear.

The thinning crowd is young, male, aimless, angry. The sort
of kids who would be unemployed even in the best of times--and
these are far from the best of times in Akron.

CUT TO:

70 INT. DRESSING ROOM NIGHT

Joe enters a cavernous dressing room. The walls are
covered with slogans and crude sketches, a hieroglyphic
history of one-night stands and defunct bands. Two Gates of
Purgatory rockers rest on a Goodwill sofa. A lone video
game against the wall.

Patti sits at a small table, removing the last of her make-up.
She recognizes Joe first:

CONTINUED

70

CONT'D.

PATTI
Hey, little brother.

They shake hands awkwardly.

PATTI
Sit down.
(he does)
You see the show?

JOE
No.

PATTI
Too bad. We were hot. Did
you see the B-Balls? The kids in
the red rubber suits?

JOE
I just got here.

PATTI
They used to open for us. Then
they got those suits. Now we
open for them.

Billy Tettore, his Hunz make-up half-scrubbed, walks past
the door, stops:

BILLY
Ozzie and Harriet!
(steps in)
My favorite couple.

Joe smiles, shakes Billy's hand:

JOE
I didn't know you were in the Hunz?

BILLY
Temporary. They had an opening.

PATTI
We have a lot of turnover. I'm one
of the three "original" Hunz.

Billy shows Joe his forearms. Each is tatoored with a
bold sequence of numbers: "371-46-4118."

CONTINUED

BILLY
(proud)

What do you think? Neat, huh?
It's my Social Security number. I
had it done when I was with another
band. Look, I gotta split and I'm
sure you got a lot of good times to
talk over. Nice seeing you, Joe.

JOE

You too.

Joe nods as Billy splits. Joe pulls a folded wad of notepaper,
hands it to Patti:

JOE

These are some lyrics I wrote.
I thought you might want them.
Nothing special. Just some ideas I
had. You can throw 'em away without
reading them if you want.

Patti takes the lyrics, hesitates, tucks them away:

PATTI

Is that why you came here? To
give me lyrics?

Joe takes out a cigarette, offers one. They share a match.

JOE

I just heard you were here.
Benji's gonna start school in the
fall. I've a picture here.

Joe opens his wallet, removes a snapshot. Patti can't resist
a glimpse: she pushes the photo away:

PATTI

Benji don't belong to me right
now. He belongs to Mother. It
can only be one way or the other.

JOE

I can arrange for you to see Bongo
without Mom knowing. I could set
it up.

(no response)

It gets hard to explain...

CONTINUED

PATTI
(vague)

Okay.

JOE

When?

PATTI
(evasive)

Soon. I'll get in touch.

JOE

Why are you acting like this?
What are you trying to prove?

PATTI

Nothing. Exactly nothing. You're
the one who's trying to prove
something.

JOE

I got nothing to prove.

PATTI

You paid Mom back the 600 for
the tools, right?

JOE

Who told you?

PATTI

Nobody. I know you're dumb
enough to pay her back--think
you could be free. Instead, you
accept her values--

JOE

What the fuck is this? Since when
did Mom invent the system where
you pay back your debts? You're
all twisted sideways. I'm just
trying to live by some common...
(searches for word)
...sense.

PATTI

That's why you don't understand
me. We were real close but you
never had the slightest idea what
I was up to. I've been trying to
live my life by an idea.

(MORE)

CONTINUED

70 CONT'D.

PATTI contd

(points)

See that machine? That's an idea. Rock and Roll. That's an idea. All those video game monsters: bip-bip-bip.

(leans forward)

Remember when I'd teach you what I'd learned in school? I'm teaching you again. Those bip-bips are separate. No moment is any more important than another. Nothing comes together. No Heaven, no Hell--just moments. When moments connect you accept Mom's world.

JOE

You don't believe that.

PATTI

See these idiots? They think they're going to be stars. Demos and limos. You hear me talk like that? No, I go out to hear the beat.

(pounds table)

That's all there is.

JOE

Is this what I'm supposed to tell Benji when I put him to bed? Maybe you could just tape this little speech so I can play it for him?

PATTI

Benji'll figure it out. He's got two good teachers.

CONTINUED

70 CONT'D.

JOE

I think--

PATTI

(interrupts)

It doesn't matter what you think.
You don't understand anything!
You're ignorant.

Joe, about to explode, pulls back. He stands:

JOE

I'm sorry this happened. I
didn't come here to fight. Say
goodbye to Billy for me.

He heads for the door.

PATTI

One more thing.

(Joe turns)

Give Benji my love.

Joe leaves without comment.

CUT TO:

71 INT. JOE AND PATTI'S BATHROOM EVENING

Joe and Benji share the antique claw-foot tub.

JOE

Turn around.

Benji twists around, squeezes back to belly. Joe scrubs
Bongo's back.

BENJI

Not so hard.

JOE

Com'on, it feels good. You gotta
get clean. Don't act like a baby.

BENJI

I'm not a baby.

JOE

Of course not. You know. last week
you were asking about Mom?

CONTINUED

71 CONT'D.

Benji's expression turns anxious. Joe can't see his face. Perhaps that's why he's chosen this moment to bring up this subject.

JOE
I talked to her.

BENJI
That was last week.

JOE
You should hear this. She--

BENJI
(stands)
I'm all done, Dad.

JOE
Maybe I'm not--and don't call me that. You call me Joe or Uncle Joe.

BENJI
(shivering)
I'm cold.

Joe stands, lifts Benji out of the tub, wraps him in a towel, rubs him dry. Joe grabs a towel for himself, brushes his wet hair back.

JOE
Don't forget to brush your teeth.

Benji dashes out.

JOE
Bongo-boy? What's wrong?

Joe steps to the door. Benji returns with his Matel guitar, petulantly offers it to Joe.

JOE
Nope, I'm not going to play for you.

Joe leads him into the living room.

CUT TO:

72

INT.

LIVING ROOM

EVENING

JOE

(paternal)

You're a big boy. You're
going to school next month.
It's your turn to play for me.

(sits on sofa)

Com'on, let's see your stance.

Benji, bashful at first, strikes a rock and roll pose: stiff legs, cold stare, guitar slung crotch level. Just like Uncle Joe. Just like Mommy. He strikes a chord.

JOE

(applauds)

Hoo! Rock and roll! Get on
down! Bongo with a bullet!

Benji swings from side to side.

JOE

Okay, Benji, now what are you
going to sing?

(Benji stops cold)

That's right. You got to have
something to sing. Okay, listen
to me. I'll teach you something.
Are you listening?

Benji, silent, nods.

JOE

Anything you say you can sing.
That's all lyrics are. Just people
talking. Watch, I'll get my guitar.

(takes it from corner)

We'll play together--you and me.
our own band. I'll turn on TV.
The very first thing we hear, that's
what we'll sing. Understand?

(Benji nods)

Ready?

Benji sets himself. Joe reaches over, flips on the television: "Barnaby Jones" fades in. Buddy Ebsen, in stand-and-speak style, addresses an off-camera character: "Just wait a second, young lady." Joe turns off the TV.

JOE

Okay, let's go.

CONTINUED

72

CONT'D.

Joe sings acappella:

JOE

"Ju-st wa-it a-sec-ond..."

(to Benji)

Okay, together now.

Joe plucks a few notes. Benji joins in:

JOE AND BENJI

"Ju-st wa-it a-sec-ond..."

CUT TO:

73

EXT.

MIDWEST RUBBER RECLAIMING DAY.

Joe and Bu, surrounded by a sea of retreads, eat lunch behind the plant. Bu speaks to no one in particular:

BU

...and now he says he's gonna buy a VCR for his van. Just let that roll around your head a while. He's got so much stuff he buys magazines to figure out more stuff to buy. Stuff he can't use and probably don't even want.

JOE

That's what America's all about.

Joe spots the FOREMAN headed their way:

JOE

Uh-oh.

They look down. The Foreman arrives:

FOREMAN

Joe, I was looking for you in the lunch room.

BU

He likes to be near tires.

FOREMAN

We got a call. Your mother's in the hospital. They want you there.

CUT TO:

74

INT. BOOTH HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY

Joe, still wearing work clothes, walks down an antiseptic corridor. His father waits outside a room down the hall. Benjamin also wears work clothes: J.C. Penny suit, striped tie, name tag.

JOE

What happened?

FATHER

I finally got her to see Dr. Natterson. She's been feeling tired. He put her in here for tests.

JOE

How is she?

FATHER

I don't know. They keep going in and out, taking tests, talking about more tests.

JOE

What do they say?

FATHER

Nothing yet. She's resting now. They got her a room.

JOE

Where's Benji?

FATHER

At the Shepley's. He thinks it's a sleep-over.

JOE

Mom's got a room?

(Father nods)

That's awful quick, isn't it?

Father nods again. They start for her room.

CUT TO:

75

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM DAY

Mother sits in bed, watching daytime TV. A potted plant stands on the bed table. She brightens as Joe enters. Her mood is upbeat. A plastic curtain separates Joan from her roommate.

CONTINUED

75

CONT'D.

JOE

Hi, Mom.

Benjamin stands at the door as Joe steps to the bed, kisses his mother. She takes his hand.

MOTHER

You look nice.

(to Father)

Doesn't he look nice?

JOE

What are you watching?

MOTHER

"Search For Tomorrow." But I don't remember any of these characters. What happened to all the others?

JOE

How you feeling?

MOTHER

How'd you feel being poked at all day? I told them I had to be home by dinner time. I said my son was coming over.

JOE

You'll be alright.

MOTHER

I'll be glad when this is over. I can't put off my diet anymore, that's for sure. I don't want to go to Florida looking this heavy. Snacking. That's all it is. If I didn't snack so much I'd be fine. I was waiting for you to come, but now I feel so tired. They say I should rest.

She turns her head against the pillow.

CUT TO:

76

EXT.

EUCLID AVE.

NIGHT

Joe, distracted, cruises the thoroughfare. WMMS blasts from the radio.

CUT TO:

77 INT. PARENTS' HOUSE NIGHT
Benjamin Rasnick, worn-out, sips coffee at the table.

CUT TO:

78 EXT. RASCAL HOUSE NIGHT
Joe parks the Toyota outside the arcade. He pauses, then enters. Electronic pings and pongs echo from inside.

CUT TO:

79 INT. HOSPITAL WAITING AREA DAY
Joe, in slacks and white shirt, sits with his father and REVEREND HUEVEL, 44. Huevel's demeanor--intelligent, to the point--believes the stereotype of his profession.
Two doctors, DR. NATTERSON, in street clothes, and DR. GOULD, in a white jacket, walk toward them. They stand.
Natterson and Huevel lock arms; they're old comrades in beside combat. Natterson turns to Joe:

NATTERSON
Joe, this is Dr. Gould. He's
an oncologist.

JOE
What's that?

NATTERSON
A cancer specialist. The biopsy
on your mother was positive. We
want to do an exploratory operation
the day after tomorrow.

Joe, stunned, looks at his father. Benjamin's expression indicates he already knows his wife's condition.

GOULD
If the malignancy is localized,
we'll cut it out right then.

JOE
What's the rush? We haven't even
had time to fill out the hospital
papers yet.

CONTINUED

79

CONT'D.

NATTERSON

Your mother has ovarian cancer. In itself, that's not so serious; the ovaries can be cut out. But in a woman her age there are no symptoms, no discharge, until the cancer moves somewhere else. We have to find out how far it's spread.

JOE

Then why even wait a day?

GOULD

There's no space tomorrow.

JOE

Does she know yet?

NATTERSON

(nods)

Most of it. I've known your mother a long time. I love her too. We'll do everything we can.

Joe turns to his father: his father looks away.

CUT TO:

80

INT.

HOSPITAL ROOM

DAY

Huevel and Father sit at Mother's bedside. The plastic curtain is pulled back; the second bed is now empty. An open Bible rests on Joan's lap.

She smiles as Joe enters. It looks like the doctors have spent the day carving lines on her face. Joe leans across the bed kisses her.

JOE

Hello, Mom. Dad. Reverend.

HUEVEL

Joe.

MOTHER

How's Benji?

JOE

He's staying with Bu and Cindy. I'll bring him by tonight. How do you feel?

CONTINUED

80 CONT'D.

MOTHER

Tired.

(laughs)

And I've got so much work
to do at home.

Joe smiles. An awkward silence. Mother mentions what
Joe cannot:

MOTHER

Sid Natterson is a good Christian
man, Joe. He's a good doctor,
but he's also a good Christian.
God will guide his hand in the
operation.

JOE

Yes.

MOTHER

Is Patti here?

JOE

No.

(a beat)

I haven't had time to reach her.

MOTHER

If she can't make it, I
understand. I know she's busy.

Joe swallows hard.

HUEVEL

(stands)

I wonder if we could all
join in prayer.

They stand.

CUT TO:

81

EXT.

555 CLUB

NIGHT

Joe parks a half-block from the 555, a working class club in
the fiery shadows of a Pittsburgh steel mill.

Teenagers sit on parked cars, drink beer. Heavy Metal vibrates
along the sidewalk. A letter-lite sign outside the club reads:
"The Hunz." Joe opens the door.

CUT TO:

82 INT. 555 CLUB NIGHT

Inside, music blasts from a row of speakers: a "fist in the face." The volume nears the pain threshold. The crowd, young, male, drunk, angry, aches for violence. Only the jackhammer beat subdues them: music loud enough to blow the mills from their minds.

Joe pushes through the hostile crowd. Ahead, obscured in smoke, the Hunz play in red crosslight.

Patti stalks the stage. She's in full metal drag, her face-afire, all flames and flares. Sweat smears her makeup. Her gravel voice belts out a repetitive abrasive cadence. Silhouetted by a floor-level white spot, Patti's a vision of hellish intensity. Obscene crowd shouts punctuate her vocals.

Joe stands at the end of the bar, watches his sister. He's never seen her so possessed.

CUT TO:

83 EXT. INTERSTATE 76 NIGHT

The pickup pushes through the Ohio night.

CUT TO:

84 INT. TOYOTA NIGHT

Patti, slumped in the shotgun seat, props her legs on the dash. She wears Hunz gear; her face is scrubbed clean. Joe and Patti drink beers in silence.

CUT TO:

85 EXT. BOOTH HOSPITAL DAWN

They plod past the admitting desk. Patti's belt-chains rattle against her studs. Joe's unshaven. Neither bothers to notice the stares they attract.

CUT TO:

86 INT. CORRIDOR DAWN

Outside Joan's room, they greet their father and Reverend Huevel. Patti and Father--neither sure what to do--shake hands. Huevel gives Patti's wardrobe a once-over, his disapproval masked by a sympathetic smile. He's a pastor, not a dress-code disciplinarian.

CONTINUED

86 CONT'D.

HUEVEL

Patti, I'm so glad you could come.

She steps back defensively.

JOE

Can we go in?

HUEVEL

(shakes head)

She's already in pre-op.
We can only wait.

CUT TO:

87 INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA DAY

Joe and Patti sip coffee across a formica table. Doctors, nurses and staff eat and gossip, come and go.

JOE

You need a place to crash?
You're welcome to stay in
the house. Benji will be there.

PATTI

Just like old times.

JOE

(ironic laugh)

Yeah.

PATTI

Thanks for the lyrics.
We didn't use them but I
thought they were pretty good.

JOE

Thanks.
(steels himself)
Patti?

PATTI

What?

JOE

Please don't cause any trouble.
For Mom's sake.

CONTINUED

87

CONT'D.

PATTI

Jesus, what kind of monster
do you think I am?

JOE

Sorry. There's just been so
much trouble in the past. I
know you love her.

PATTI

I wouldn't go that far.

JOE

How far?

PATTI

I don't even know what you
mean by that word.

JOE

"L-O-V-E"? It's not a
difficult concept.

PATTI

I don't L-O-V-E anybody, not
in anyway you'd understand.

JOE

But you love Benji?
You love me?

PATTI

Drop it, Joe.

A confrontation seems imminent. Father enters, starts toward
Joe and Patti. Their expressions stop him short. Benjamin
makes a diplomatic retreat; Patti, ambivalent, watches her father.

JOE

(voice rising)
But you love Mother?

PATTI
(hard)

Drop it.

JOE

Because if you don't, I
don't want you here.

CONTINUED

87 CONT'D.

PATTI

She was the one who asked me.

Joe's cup shakes in the saucer:

JOE

Tell me.

Patti's finger taps the table: tap, tap. She stares at Joe. Her face blank.

JOE

Why did you come?

PATTI

Curiosity.

CUT TO:

88 EXT. JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE DAY

The Toyota pulls into their driveway. A reassuring tableau: on the surface, nothing's changed.

Joe and Patti get out of the pickup.

CUT TO:

89 INT. LIVING ROOM DAY

Joe and Patti, exhausted, enter. Joe closes the door behind them. They've been up 30 hours.

Cindy and Benji wait across the room. Benji's face glows at the sight of his mother. He runs to Patti's arms.

Patti trembles. She wraps her arms around Benji, clasps him to her breast. She hides her face in his, kissing air. All he can say is "Mommy, Mommy, Mommy." All she can reply: "Benji, Benji, Benji." A tidal wave of emotion, ever closer to the shore. She struggles, retains her composure.

Joe and Cindy stand in place. After a moment Patti sets Benji down, looks at Joe and Cindy as if to say, "What are you two staring at?"

CONTINUED

89 CONT'D.

CINDY
I missed you, Patti.

PATTI
(to Benji)
Com'on Benji, let's go to your
room. What new books do you have?
Let's read something together. Did
you get school clothes? Show me.

Joe and Cindy watch as Patti leads Benji upstairs.

CINDY
I should be going.

JOE
Thanks, Cindy.

Joe, clothed, collapses on the sofa as Cindy exits.

CUT TO:

90 INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE DAY

Dr. Gould speaks to Father, Rev. Huevel and Joe in a
nondescript room. Dr. Natterson stands to the side.

Ben Rasnick, in the chair, looks away.

GOULD
...the cancer has spread into
the liver, the intestines, the
pancreas. If we had tried to
remove all of it, we would have
lost her on the table. So we
sewed her up.

JOE
What's next?

NATTERSON
Chemotherapy. But that's if...

An INTERN pokes his head in the door:

INTERN
Dr. Natterson?

CONTINUED

90 CONT'D.

NATTERSON

Not now.

INTERN

But...?

NATTERSON

Get out.

The mortified Intern vanishes.

JOE

But that's if what?

NATTERSON

That's if you choose to make that decision.

. CUT TO:

91 INT. EUCLID TAVERN NIGHT

Patti enters, looks around. She wears Hunz black, minus chains and studs.

The Euc is beginning to fill up. Joe, Bu and Gene share a pitcher at a corner table. On stage, three college kids (THE PROBLEMS) set up their synthesizers.

Joe calls to a PASSING GIRL: she laughs.

GENE

Patti!

Patti pulls up a chair. Joe won't look at her.

BU

Sorry to hear about your mom.
It's a real kick in the ass.

PATTI

(sits)

I had to get out.

Joe walks off without comment. He crosses the room, approaches the table where the Passing Girl sits with TWO GIRLFRIENDS.

GENE

What's with him?

CONTINUED

91 CONT'D.

CINDY
(to Patti)
How's your dad?

PATTI
Asleep. He's full of valium.
They got him a nurse. Benji's
there too.

GENE
What you gonna do?

PATTI
Hang around, I guess. The Hunz
already broke up.

GENE
Oogie offered the old Barbusters
a gig here two weeks after next.

PATTI.
I know. I took it. How about it?

BU
Shit yes. I love the Euc.

GENE
...the "Puke."

Across the room, Joe proffers a comment which sends his companions
fleeing. Too gross?

PATTI
(looks at band)
Who are they?

BU
One of Oog's cut-rate specials.

GENE
"The Problems."

BU
Yeah, they used to be called "Sins."
Now they're just "Problems."

Patti laughs, raises her glass:

PATTI
Let's get drunk.

LATER: the bar is half-filled. Couples slow-shuffle on the
dance floor--or wherever else they feel like. The Problems
play a Peter and Gordon cover alla Talking Heads.

CONTINUED

91 CONT'D.

The hour is late. A determined wife strong-arms her protesting husband out the door. A white-faced student staggers toward the john. The others feel no pain.

Joe, tipsy, approaches a WELL-DRESSED GIRL:

JOE

What's the difference between a scumbag and the Eiffel Tower?

WELL-DRESSED GIRL

The Eiffel Tower doesn't come on to girls like me.

Joe veers over to Bu:

JOE

What's the capitol of West Virginia?

BU

Akron.

They sit on the edge of the stage, beside the synthesizers.

JOE

You know the Barbusters were a great band.

Bu nods.

JOE

We were good.

Bu leans over confidentially:

BU

I want to tell you something I've never told anybody before.

JOE

What?

BU

I always had the hots for Patti. I remember the first time I met her-- Jesus F.D. Christ. I always figured sometime, somewhere on the road we'd make it. You didn't have to zone in on her ass every night. But it never happened. Why? Why's that? I'm not so bad lookin'.

CONTINUED

91 CONT'D.

Bu watches as Patti slow dances with Gene ACROSS THE ROOM.
Joe glowers.

Gene, enamored, holds Patti's waist:

GENE

...all that time I thought you
thought I was just some dumb jock.

PATTI

You were the backbone of the band.
You were the most important person.

GENE

Really?

TIMECUT. The Problems segue to techno reggae. Joe and Cindy
slow-dance eye-to-eye, oblivious to the kids skanking around them.
Bu, AT THE BAR, orders a drink from Oogie.

JOE

You know Bu really loves you.
You're the most important thing
in his life.

CINDY

What did he do now?

JOE

(moony)

That's why I never came on to
you--though I always wanted to.
I would think of us making love,
taking off your white uniform. You
must be wonderful in bed. Patti
likes Bu too--but I never hit on
you. That's the difference.

CINDY

I like you too. In a different way.

LATER: a six-pack of regulars remain. Percy sings on the box
as The Problems pack their gear.

Bu, Cindy and Gene bicker beside the stage. Joe and Patti slow-
dance alone in the center of the floor. They've been avoiding
each other all night. They've gossiped, seduced and back-stabbed
their way through friends to get to this moment.

They rock back and forth, belly to belly, crotch to crotch.
more like lovers than siblings.

PATTI

I always had this dream. We were
on stage together, surrounded by
friends we could see who couldn't
see us. And the only sound was music.

CONTINUED

91 CONT'D.

JOE

And when did this dream end?

PATTI

Never.

JOE

It's not my dream.

PATTI

What is?

JOE

I don't know. There's music and a girl in it somewhere--you're certainly no help. Every girl I wanted I compared to you--and that ended that.

She nods in agreement.

JOE

Why didn't we talk about this before?

They embrace.

JOE

It's not like we didn't have a chance to talk.

She sets him up:

PATTI

Joe, there's something I've been wanting to tell you. I've been waiting for the right time.

JOE

What's that?

Then comes in for the kill:

PATTI

I never traded those tools for a mixing board or even got money. The deal fell through. I swiped the Peavey from a group at Peabody's. After I found you borrowed the money from Mom, I just threw the tools away. Understand? You kissed Mom's ass, worked six months, saved \$600 for nothing. That's the story of your life. That's your whole life wrapped up in a maxi-pad.

Joe retreats in a blur. Patti, victorious, holds her ground.

CUT TO:

92 INT. MIDWEST RUBBER RECLAIMING DAY

A week later. Joe and Bu sort tires.

CUT TO:

93 EXT. HOSPITAL DAY

Patti parks the Toyota, gets out. She wears laundered jeans, running shoes and a striped Hathaway shirt--set off by spiked wristbands.

She tucks a package under her arm, walks toward the entrance.

CUT TO:

94 INT. CANCER WARD ROOM DAY

Joan Rasnick has been moved to a new room. Get Well bouquets and cards fill the available shelf space.

Patti pulls up a chair. Joan's raised bed permits a view of the room.

Mother's condition has deteriorated since her operation. Her abdomen is bloated, her face gaunt.

She smiles as Patti kisses her. They've come to an "arrangement."

PATTI

(opening package)
I brought you something, Mom.

MOTHER

What is it?

Patti pulls a "Simon" game out of the bag, places it on Joan's lap.

PATTI

It's a "Simon" game. You play it like Simple Simon. It used to be popular a long time ago. It took me forever to find one. Watch: I press blue...

(presses blue)

...then the machine repeats. I press blue and any color...

(presses blue and red)

...and the machine repeats again. Then you repeat. If you get it wrong the machine buzzes and you lose.

They play. Mother's eyes twinkle like a child's as she presses a color square. The machine buzzes.

CONTINUED

MOTHER

Shoot! Let's play again.

This time Mother starts, pushes red: BUZZ. Patti follows with yellow: HIGH NOTE.

MOTHER

Oh, I can't remember if it was red-yellow or yellow-red? Can I just push red if I want?

PATTI

That's what it's for.

MOTHER

Are you and Joe getting along?

PATTI

No problem.

MOTHER

I told him how much I enjoy seeing you every day. He's a good boy--like his father. I almost married someone else. His name was John Palsrock. Oh, he was a card. Always cutting up, telling jokes. We would laugh and laugh. But he wasn't responsible. Then I met Ben and married him. My brothers were upset but I never regretted it. I wonder what he thought?

PATTI

John Palsrock?

MOTHER

Your father.

PATTI

Sometimes, when I think about this, I think that all these decisions, the big ones, the small ones, are all the same. You marry Ben Rasnick, not John Palsrock, you push red, not yellow. I have a child or don't have a child. I marry or don't marry. It's all the same: we're all here and we all live in Grace.

Mother, confused, struggles to understand.

CUT TO:

95 INT. PATTI AND JOE'S LIVING ROOM EVENING

Joe and Benji play guitars on the sofa. Benji positions his new "professional model" K-Mart five-string. Joe plucks his guitar; Benji watches, repeats.

Joe sings, Benji joins him:

JOE AND BENJI
 "Just wait a second, young
 lady,
 Just wait a second, if you
 please."

CUT TO:

96 INT. THE SYMPOSIUM NIGHT

A country bar in West Cleveland. A faded U.S. flag hangs behind the stage; the adjoining walls glow with beer signs.

Billy rises from his drum seat as the OLD BOYS, a "Waylon-n-Willie" cover band, breaks between sets.

Patti walks over to Billy, shares a laugh, asks him a question.

CUT TO:

97 INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM NIGHT

Ben Rasnick kneels in prayer.

CUT TO:

98 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM DAY

Two nurses draw blood from Joan Rasnick's arm. Patti sits beside her mother, holds her other arm. Joe stands against the wall, watching.

The OLDER NURSE instructs the TRAINEE NURSE about the correct procedure. The Trainee is nervous and unsure. She has struck the needle in an impoverished vein, can't seem to extract blood.

YOUNGER NURSE
 (upset)

Oh.

OLDER NURSE
 Try another vein.
 (to Mother)
 Just be a good girl.

Mother grimaces, snaps back:

MOTHER
 I don't want to be a good girl!

CONTINUED

98 CONT'D.

There's still fire in Mother's spirit. Joe can hardly bear it:

JOE
(to Older Nurse)
Can't you find somebody more--?

OLDER NURSE
Quiet, please. This is difficult.

Joe watches: OFF SCREEN, the Trainee tries another vein.

Patti moves her mouth an inch from mother's ear; her arm supports Mother's shoulders. Joan quivers spasmodically. Patti speaks into her mother's ear. Her voice is detached, a soothing litany:

PATTI
This pain is not real, Mother. You are not here. Your arm is not in this room. It is somewhere far away, alone, isolated. Only you and I are in this room. We are alone. Your arm is far away. You can't feel it. Here there is only the touch of my hand, the sound of my voice, the touch of my lips. Nothing else exists...

MOTHER
(straining)
Patti...

PATTI
Don't let them into our world.
There's nothing else, no pain...

OFF SCREEN, the Trainee sticks the needle deeper. Mother lets out a strangled scream. Patti keeps talking.

Joe can't take it anymore. He turns to the wall, walks away.

CUT TO:

99 INT. CORRIDOR DAY

Father and Huevel wait in prefab chairs. Joe composes himself as they stand. Joe smiles grimly, touches his father's sleeve.

CONTINUED

99 CONT'D.

FATHER
(flat)

I always thought I'd go first.

HUEVEL

Joe, can we talk alone a minute?

Huevel leads him down the hall. They stop beside the elevator.

HUEVEL

I want to talk about Patti.

JOE

What now?

HUEVEL

Watch out for her.

JOE

Huh?

HUEVEL

You've known me a long time. Not well, but long. I'm a reasonable man, I'm tolerant, I live in the real world. Your father and I have talked about this: Patti is dangerous.

JOE

Excuse my language, Reverend, but what is this shit?

HUEVEL

Your sister believes in nothing. She doesn't care about family, church, society. She doesn't care if the poor are fed or the garbage collected or--

JOE

(interrupts)

She helps Mother. That's all that matters now.

HUEVEL

Her brain is poisoned and now she's trying to poison her mother's. She's in there right now trying to strip Joan of the one thing she needs most-- her faith. Every night I sit with your mother, fighting Patti's influence. Your mother's mind is weak. Patti's chosen this moment to get her revenge.

CONTINUED

99 CONT'D.

JOE
I won't listen to this anymore.

Joe walks down the stairway.

CUT TO:

100 EXT. JOE AND PATTI'S HOUSE EVENING

Joe parks the Toyota out front. He turns off the engine lights, but doesn't get out. He sits unmoving, watching the house. The interior shines brightly.

His POV: inside, Patti, wearing panties and a skimpy halter, plays with Benji. She lifts Benji, kisses him.

Joe watches, lost in thought. Remembering Huevel's words.

CUT TO:

101 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR DAY

Father, Joe, Benji and Patti sit on a row of multi-colored chairs. Benji, wearing his Sunday best, holds his mother's hand.

Drs. Natterson and Gould step out of Joan's room. Natterson approaches Patti:

NATTERSON
Your mother would like to see you alone.

Patti and Joe stand simultaneously.

PATTI
(to Benji)
Stay with Grandpa.

Father welcomes Benji as Patti enters Mother's room. Joe turns to Dr. Gould:

JOE
Some job you got. You must see this every day.

GOULD
It's not so bad. Sometimes, in a freak case like this, you can only stand and watch. Other times you can help and cure.

JOE
Then why keep testing her? She doesn't need test drugs, she needs pain-killers. She's in pain all the time now. Can't you give her something?

CONTINUED

101 CONT'D.

GOULD

We just did. There won't be
any more tests.

CUT TO:

102 INT.

HOSPITAL ROOM

DAY

Mother steadies herself as Patti takes a seat. "Simon" rests on the bed table. Mother's condition is markedly worse. Her poise and make-up cannot disguise the aura of death.

Mother motions to the full-time NURSE:

MOTHER

Could we be alone?

The Nurse doesn't budge.

PATTI

It's alright. Ask Dr. Natterson.

NURSE

I'll be right outside.

The Nurse closes the door behind her.

MOTHER

The Simon broke. I think I
played it too much.

PATTI

Maybe it needs batteries.

MOTHER

Dad got new batteries. It still
doesn't work.

PATTI

We'll get another.

MOTHER

Is there anybody waiting to see me?

PATTI

No.

MOTHER

It's so tiring to be friendly. Nobody
likes to visit someone who's unhappy.

PATTI

You don't need to put on a show
for us, Mom.

CONTINUED

102 CONT'D.

MOTHER

They gave me a shot for pain but it makes me dizzy. Sometimes I talk crazy. If I talk crazy, just tell me, I'll stop.

PATTI

It's alright.

MOTHER

There's nobody out there?

PATTI

No.

Mother makes her move. She and Patti have long been locked in moral combat. Summoning her failing faculties, Mother, like a dying bitch protecting her pups, prepares for the final struggle.

MOTHER

Good. I'm so tired. How are you?

PATTI

I'm fine.

MOTHER

I don't want you to be sad.

PATTI

I know.

MOTHER

This is not a sad time.

PATTI

I'm not sad.

Patti eyes her cautiously.

MOTHER

I'm going to see my dad. I've missed him so much over the years. I'm looking forward to it. And my mother and little brother too--Thomas. I've thought about him so often. I don't remember him. I was only three when he died. He was two. I've always wondered what he was like. Well, now I'm going to see him. I'm going to see them all.

CONTINUED

102 CONT'D.

PATTI
I'm happy for you.

MOTHER
Is Joe dating?

PATTI
A little, I think.

MOTHER
I'm sure he'll find someone.
You'll help him.

PATTI
I'm sure he will.

MOTHER
I'm sorry about the way I acted
when you got pregnant. Sometimes
a person can be very stupid and
can't help it. Can you forgive me?

Pause: no answer.

MOTHER
I don't want to leave with this
on my... conscience.

PATTI
It's in the past, Mom.

MOTHER
Your father is a very good man
but he's very lonely. He...

Joan's eyes glaze over. She examines her fingernails as if
she's never seen them before.

PATTI
Mom?

Summoning her willpower, Mother struggles, strains, refocuses
her attention. Her determination is chilling.

MOTHER
(lucid again)
Is Joe dating?

PATTI
I think so.

MOTHER
Your father is a very good man
but he's very lonely. He doesn't
have many friends. I want you and
Joe to encourage him to remarry.
(MORE)

CONTINUED

102 CONT'D.

MOTHER contd

He'll die if he stays single. He needs a woman. Will you do that?

PATTI

Yes.

MOTHER

He won't listen to me about this but he'll listen to you and Joe. I have two women in mind, one lives here, the other lives in Florida. Sue Lanchill and Wilmina Garley. Both their husbands are dead. They were old friends of ours. Willie is my first choice. She lives in Ocala in her own house. She's about my age. She's very kind but shy. She's been alone seven years. Maybe if Ben took a vacation he could pay her a visit, a social call. They would be very happy together.

PATTI

I'll suggest it to him.

(a beat)

I promise.

MOTHER

It's not too much to ask?

PATTI

No.

MOTHER

I'm telling you this because you understand. You are stronger than Joe. You were always special. I almost died giving birth to you. Caesarian section was much more dangerous then. I knew I would have no more children. In labor I said, "He better be worth it." And you were.

Patti shifts her weight, steels herself. It's time for her to make her move:

PATTI

Mother, I know you've always wanted to know who Benji's father was.

CONTINUED

102 CONT'D.

Patti pauses for effect, as if about to drive a dagger into her mother's heart. Mother listens without expression.

PATTI

(cutting)

It was John Anders. Remember him?
He was a Deacon, ran Young People's?
You always thought he was
so perfect. He was in your prayer
group. You said he was a good influence
on me. Well, it was him.

(a beat)

What do you think of that?

Patti's words have the opposite effect. Mother seems relieved, not hurt. Her lips form a thin smile:

MOTHER

Good, I'm glad you told me. Now
I can forgive him.

(a beat)

Have you forgiven him?

Patti's speechless. Mother slides her hand toward Patti.

MOTHER

I never believed the terrible
things people said about you. I
always believed in you. You were
the special one. You were worth it.
You were the one I loved most.

Mother touches Patti's face with her gaunt hand. Patti's eyes are moist. Mother's voice grows weaker:

MOTHER

You're a mother too. It's not
always easy. You may have also
said or done things as a mother you
regret. Have I done anything so terrible
it can't be forgiven?

Patti kisses her mother's fingers one by one. Patti shivers.

PATTI

(voice cracking)

No.

MOTHER

There's one last favor I'd like
to ask.

CONTINUED

102 CONT'D.

PATTI

Yes?

MOTHER

(voice weaker)

Another thing.

Patti leans her ear to her mother's mouth.

PATTI

Yes? What is it?

MOTHER

(pause for effect)

I want you to join me in Heaven.
I want you to say that you will
be there.

Patti, tears on her cheeks, looks into her mother's eyes,
sinks to her mother's breast.

PATTI

(muffled)

Yes.

MOTHER

Will you?

PATTI

Yes.

Mother cradles Patti's head:

MOTHER

Good. I must conserve my energy.
I'd like to see your father now.

Mother's voice is abruptly clear and strong, her jaw set.
What have we witnessed the last five minutes: a genuine
outpouring of emotion or a theatrical performance? Whichever,
it has succeeded.

Patti pulls herself up, walks out in a daze.

CUT TO:

103

INT.

CORRIDOR

DAY

Patti closes the door, leans against it, exhausted. Her
eyes are red. Joe walks over:

CONTINUED

103 CONT'D.

JOE
Patti? Is anything wrong?
Is she alright?

PATTI
(to Father)
She'd like to see you.

Patti turns, strides down the hall. Joe struggles to keep up:

JOE
What happened?

They reach the elevator. Patti presses the button.

JOE
What happened?

PATTI
God. And I thought I
was tough.
(a beat)
She tried to break me.

The elevator opens; Patti steps in. As the doors close, Patti, all false bravado, yells to Joe:

PATTI
But she didn't get me!

CUT TO:

104 EXT. BOOTH HOSPITAL

EVENING

In summer dusk.

CUT TO:

105 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

NIGHT

Father, Joe, Benji and Rev. Huevel sit around Joan's bed. Only Patti is missing.

CONTINUED

105 CONT'D.

They watch a Sunday evening religious program. The show has a "family" format. The host, an evangelical Lawrence Welk, introduces his relatives one by one: each sings or plays a musical instrument.

The organ starts to play. "The Wakeley Sisters," dressed in yellow, step to the microphone, sing "In the Garden."

The room is silent. The sisters' voices have a hypnotic effect. Joe looks at his mother. She's at peace: a pre-celestial moment.

The serenity is intolerable.

Joe inaudibly excuses himself, tiptoes out.

CUT TO:

106 INT.

CORRIDOR

NIGHT

The corridor is darkened. A nurse, dressed in white, ghostly passes the elevator. Blue television light falls from an open doorway.

Joe walks down the hall, stops at the open door. Inside, The Wakeley Sisters sing on a wall-mounted TV. It's as if the pre-dead are communicating through their televisions.

Joe waits in a tangerine chair.

LATER: a hushed commotion outside Mother's room. Two nurses enter, then an intern.

Joe watches but doesn't rise.

A doctor enters. Ben Rasnick exits a moment later. Rev. Huevel follows with Benji.

Joe stands. His father walks toward him, stops:

FATHER

She's dead.

(a beat)

What will I do now?

CUT TO:

107 INT.

PATTI AND JOE'S LIVING ROOM

EVENING

Joe straightens his tie in the mirror. Benji, at his side, tries to do the same. Joe's black suit, unworn for years, pre-dates Armani.

CONTINUED

107 CONT'D.

JOE
Just a sec, Bongo-boy.

Joe kneels to straighten Benji's tie and jacket.

BENJI
Are we going to Heaven?

JOE
Grandma went to Heaven. We're going to the funeral home.

BENJI
Oh.

Joe stands, tugs at his ill-fitting jacket:

JOE
Don't be so disappointed.

BENJI
Where's Mom?

JOE
She'll be there.

CUT TO:

108 EXT. BONNER FUNERAL HOME NIGHT

A converted colonial manion on Lorain Ave. "Joan Rasnick" is one of two names on a backlit sign.

CUT TO:

109 INT. VIEWING ROOM NIGHT

Folding chairs are set against the walls. A garish orange-brown carpet dominates the impersonal room. Mother's body rests in a gun metal casket surrounded by floral wreathes. "How Great Thou Art" plays on unseen speakers.

A line of friends and relatives wait to pass the bier: after they offer condolences to the family.

CONTINUED

109 CONT'D.

Father, Joe and Benji stand at the end of the receiving line. Reverend Huevel greets new arrivals at the door. Patti's nowhere to be seen.

UNCLE WES, Joan's brother, bald, late 50s, embraces Ben. He wipes his cheeks.

UNCLE WES

I'm sorry I wasn't here. I was making plans to come next week. I didn't know it would happen this fast.

FATHER

Nobody did.

Wes steps over to Joe as his WIFE embraces Ben.

UNCLE WES

My little sister. I loved her so. Yet we saw so little of each other. What a strange country this is.

JOE

I know.

Wes smiles, bends toward Benji as his Wife asks Father:

WES' WIFE

Where's Patti?

FATHER

She's not feeling well.

The line inches forward. A SIXTIESH WOMAN takes Wes' Wife's place, holds Father's hand.

WOMAN

Joan was such a happy, wonderful person.

Joe glances across the room. Bu, in jeans and a muscle T-shirt, stops at the casket, pays his last respects. Cindy and Dr. Natterson wait behind them.

Bu walks over to Ben, offers condolences. Bu and Joe embrace, each uncomfortable with the genuine feelings welling inside.

BU

Your mother was a nice woman. I know you had problems, but she was always nice to me.

CONTINUED

109 CONT'D.

Bu motions Joe aside; Cindy crosses over to Benji.

JOE

I thought you were playing
the Euc tonight?

BU

We are.

(checks watch)

But I gotta feeling we're gonna be
a singer short. Have you heard from
Patti?

(Joe shakes head)

Damn, I thought you would. Shit.
Com'on, stand in for her. We can't
cancel. The old crowd's going to be there.

JOE

Sing?

Joe overhears Dr. Natterson's wife:

NATTERSON'S WIFE

(to Father)

Where's Patti?

Ben repeats the now-familiar excuse ("not feeling well"). Looks helplessly at Joe. Joe whispers to Bu:

JOE

Go to the Euclid. I'll try
to find her.

Bu turns to Cindy and Benji. Joe takes Father aside:

JOE

Dad, I have to leave. I love
you. I'll see you later.

Bu follows Joe out of the room. Cindy stays with Benji.
Rev. Huevel tries to catch Joe's attention:

HUEVEL

Joe, I'm sorry if I said...

Joe doesn't bother to listen. He and Bu are out the door,
on the street.

CUT TO:

110 EXT. FUNERAL HOME NIGHT

Joe and Bu split up.

CUT TO:

111 INT. RASCAL HOUSE NIGHT

Joe pushes his way through goofy sub-teens. He searches up one row of flashing video games, down another. His eyes flit from one female face to the next.

A COCKY KID pushes Joe back. Joe responds with a sharp elbow to the Kid's chest.

Joe finds Patti at an Infraspac machine. Dressed in Hunz leather, she stares at the video screen, not playing, not moving.

JOE

What are you doing? You set up the gig at the Euc. They're waiting for you.

PATTI

Got any quarters? I went through twenty bucks. I'm flat out of money.

JOE

Are you drunk?

PATTI

No.

JOE

Get your ass up. I'll drive you over.

PATTI

I ain't going. I ain't gonna play anymore.

JOE

Forget the family shit. At least I thought you cared about music.

PATTI

You quit, remember? Now I quit.

JOE

(pause)

I used to worship you. You and your leather jacket. God knows why. I'm leaving. I got things to do.

CONTINUED

111 CONT'D.

He turns to leave.

PATTI
You see Dad?

JOE
(looks back)
How is he, you mean? The hard
part ain't even started.

PATTI
Where is he?

JOE
(steps away)
You figure it out.

Joe takes another step, turns back:

JOE
What will you do now?

Joe pushes his way out.

CUT TO:

112 EXT. EUCLID TAVERN NIGHT

The letter-lite sign reads: "Welcome Back, Barbusters!"

CUT TO:

113 INT. EUCLID TAVERN NIGHT

Joe joins Bu, Billy and Gene as they set up equipment on stage. Bu greets Joe with an extended hand and broad smile. Joe shakes hands all around.

The Euclid is packed with old faces, friends and fans. Friday night: everyone's laughing, drinking, listening to the juke box. The Barbusters banter with bar mates as they prep.

CUT TO:

114 INT. FUNERAL HOME VIEWING ROOM NIGHT

Father stands alone beside Joan's open casket. A FUNERAL HOME EMPLOYEE stands discretely at the door.

Faintly, in the background. SOUNDS from the Euclid Tavern continue.

CONTINUED

114 CONT'D.

Ben Rasnick bends over his wife. Her wristwatch has stopped. He corrects the time, winds the knob.

CUT TO:

115 INT. FUNERAL HOME FOYER NIGHT

Reverend Huevel waits with Cindy and Benji, Wes, Wes' Wife and TWO OTHER RELATIVES in the darkened entrance.

Patti enters in metal gear, drops to her knees, hugs Benji. The relatives watch with baffled, censorious stares.

Patti releases Benji, stands, walks into the viewing room.

SOUNDS from the Euclid--CROWD NOISE, JUKE BOX MUSIC--continue to grow.

CUT TO:

116 INT. VIEWING ROOM NIGHT

Patti embraces her father. They squeeze each other tightly.

FATHER

Patti, I...

They hug again. Patti and Father have been aching to embrace for years. Death releases their inhibitions. Perhaps only death can bring people so close together.

FATHER

Patti...

PATTI

There was some confusion. I just got here.

FATHER

It feels so strange. How can it be?

SOUNDS from the Euc grow louder. The Barbusters are tuning up. Benji watches from the doorway.

PATTI

You're not alone, Dad. We're here. There are things to do. Places, people to visit.

A "Barbuster" chant cuts through the track.

PATTI

Can you forgive me?

CONTINUED

116 CONT'D.

They embrace.

The Euclid SOUNDS are now full volume. "Barbusters" shouts fill the track; the din drowns out the funeral home.

CUT TO:

117 INT. EUCLID TAVERN NIGHT

Joe rolls up his jacket sleeves as he steps to the mike. He yells back to the crowd:

JOE

Hello! You may remember me!

Cheers, applause. All the while, Joe incites the audience with a repetitive guitar refrain: do-do-da, do-do-da.

JOE

My name's Joe Rasnick! Me and my sister Patti used to play here a lot. We're the Barbusters!

Do-do-da, do-do-da. The applause builds to a sustained roar.

JOE

Anybody here from Cleveland!

(cheers)

Anybody here want to party!

(more cheers)

Anybody here want to rock and roll!

(pandemonium)

Joe lunges into the opening chords of the title song. He has been holding a lot back a long time: years of pent-up emotions break through his voice.

The lyrics seem richer, deeper. The events of the past year have given them new meaning.

Seemingly from nowhere, Patti jumps on stage and joins Joe at the mike. They sing side by side, one in a suit, the other a leather jacket, each a polar edge of black.

The crowd goes over the top.

Patti and Joe playfully bump shoulders, bump butts. They look into each other's eyes, squeeze cheek to cheek at the mike. They sing of family ties, debts due and paid, the power of music. And of being born in the U.S.A.

THE END